THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES,

Of certain Moderate Divines of the CHURCH of *England*,

(greatly mis-understood)

Truly Represented and Defended;

Wherein (by the way)
Some Controversies, of no mean Importance, are succinctly discussed:

IN

A Free Discourse between two Intimate Friends.

In III Parts.

Phil. 4. 5. *Let your Moderation be known unto all men.*

LONDON, Printed for *Lodowick Lloyd*, at the *Crown* in *Duck Lane*, MDCLXX.


BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA

To the Reader.

READER,

WHat may be the Fate of this Book, I can't Divine, nor will I be solicitous concerning it: But I expect, and also *claim* at thine hands so much Candour, as that, how meanly soever thou mayest think of it, thou wilt not judge uncharitably of the Author's Design in writing it. I (that may best know it) am able to assure thee, that it was not to gratifie those Persons (he wisheth he may not rather offend them) whom he therein giveth

a true account of; but to ſerve a more noble Intereſt: Nor is it his deſire, that their Adverſaries would entertain a more favourable opinion of them, upon their reading the following Lines, but onely in order to their being reconciled to their *Spirit* and *Principles*.

This is an Age wherein plain and open-hearted Dealing will be by no means endured, and muſt look for no better thanks from the generality, than Calumnies and down-right Rayling. But I am very ſure that no man can be eaſily provoked by any thing in this *Dialogue*, but he that accounts Moderation a great Crime; and is conſcious to himſelf,

ſelf, that he is, in the way it hath pleaſed him to eſpouſe, a hot ſpirited and violent *Zealot*. For neither *Theophilus* nor *Philalethes*, have taken a courſe to exaſperate any one of the conteſting Parties, but only (and much alike too) the high and fierce men of each Party. And as for ſuch, they could not perſwade themſelves to be over-careful not to diſpleaſe them; as too well knowing that it would ſignifie nothing ſo to be; they being a Generation of people whoſe waſpiſh and teſty (not to add proud) Spirits, can by no means brook a Diſſenter, ſcarcely in the ſmalleſt, and moſt trivial matters. Whereas *Theophilus*, as he paſſeth along,

doth engage himself in the Confutation of certain Opinions, I desire thee to take notice, that he is, notwithstanding, so far from a disputing or contradicting Genius, that I know no man more averse than himself thereto: And he thinks time infinitely better spent in the serious practice of true Piety, than in disputing or studying Controversies: and that there is no such life, when all is done, as that which is chiefly employed in mortifying Corruptions, and making our selves more and more like to God, and fit for the enjoyment of him. And, indeed, if all our Professors of Christianity did sincerely love God, and made it their great

business

buſineſs to keep Conſciences void of offence towards him and men; it would be ſcarcely worth the while to concern our ſelves much about curing them of any of their miſtakes: For ſo long as they are careful to exerciſe themſelves in ſo doing, to be ſure they cannot poſſibly be ſuch as would ſo far injure them, as to render them uncapable of Eternal Bleſſedneſs. But ſeeing there are ſeveral *Opinions*, very highly cryed up among us, which do apparently make many of the Embracers of them much worſe, and have an extreamly bad influence upon their Lives, and therefore much more upon their Souls, it muſt needs be a work of great Charity

to

to endeavour to undeceive thoſe that hold them. *And* they are ſuch Doctrines alone, as *Theophilus* is aſſured are of very bad conſequence, that he hath *much* troubled himſelf about, in this *Diſcourſe*. *As* for the laſt *Opinion*, that he ſpends any conſiderable time in endeavouring to ſhew the falſity of, it was at firſt his intention to take no notice of it: But (to deal freely with thee) he could not, upon ſecond thoughts, gain leave of his *Conſcience* to let it paſs: for that told him that he would ſhew but little love to his infinitely *Good God*, or concernment for his Honour, ſhould he not take advantage of ſo fit and proper an occaſion

ſion as was then offered him to vindicate him from the moſt unworthy Repreſentation that Doctrine giveth of him. And he ſolemnly profeſſeth that he would have ſaid nothing of it, were he not conſtrained to do otherwiſe by his Love to God, and the Souls of Men: And by his earneſt deſire to give his Teſtimony againſt the abuſe that is thereby put upon the beſt of Beeings, & alſo to contribute his little Mite towards the utter ſilencing of that Plea for Careleſneſs and Irreligion, that very many (if not moſt) men from thence make. *Whoever they be that ſhall take offence at that Perſon for freely ſpeaking his own mind, becauſe it hath*

hath the ill hap not to jump with theirs, I would fain know of them why he may not be as much out of humour (though he is resolved he will not) with them *again: For surely* he *doth not more differ from* them, *than* they *do from* him.

Well, *Reader*, it is high time to be reconciled to *Moderation* and *Sobriety*, to lay aside our uncharitable and (therefore) unchristian heats against each other: And to labour to preserve the Unity of the Spirit (if it be not already quite lost) in the bond of Peace, and throw water upon those Flames that threaten our destruction, (and but for God's Infinite Mercy would have effected it before now) instead of

ad-

adding more fewel to them. *And* that is the *great Deſign* (as thou wilt eaſily perceive) of the enſuing *Diſcourſe*.

Moreover, I moſt humbly entreat thee to conſider, that as God was not in the *Whirlwind*, but in the *ſtill Voice*; So *Divine Truth* is far more unlikely to be found among men of violent and boiſterous Paſſions, than among thoſe that are *ſoberly* and *ſedately conſiderative*. Paſſion doth cloud and darken the underſtanding, it caſts a thick miſt before the eye of the Soul, and makes it altogether unapt to diſcern a difference betwixt *Truth*, and the *error* that is neareſt to it; and to diſtinguiſh it from one of the extreams

treams which it lyeth between.

I have another Requeſt to make to thee, *viz.* *If thou ſhalt vouchſafe to caſt an eye upon this* Diſcourſe, *that thou wouldeſt not only read here and there ſome part of it, but take the ſmall pains to run it through: For by this means thou mayeſt underſtand the Authors ſence in ſeveral Paſſages, which otherwiſe thou wilt be lyable to be miſtaken concerning: And alſo to go away with a falſe notion (in ſome Particulars) of the Perſons therein repreſented. Whom, ſhould they judge it an over-bold attempt to give the World, without their own conſent or knowledge, a Character of them, he knows to be Maſters*

of

of ſo great ingenuity as will eaſily encline them to put up ſuch faults (how great ſoever they may ſeem in themſelves) as are mitigated by the Circumſtance of well-meaning.

The *Author* is aware that the matters diſcourſed might have been digeſted into a more accurate Method; but yet he is not like to *apologize* for it, till thou canſt convince him, that the neglect of Formalities, and curious exactneſs of any kind, in *Diſcourſes between Friends*, is blame worthy. Nor yet will he plead excuſe for the plainneſs of his Style, till he hath reaſon to believe that the Vulgar (whoſe beneſit is here principally intenten-

tended) are capable of under-ſtanding higher Language.

I ſhall detain thee no longer, than till I have told thee, that he ſaith, may this trifle be inſtrumental to beget in but any one a more free, ingenuous, and amicable Temper, he ſhall not think he hath cauſe to repent his permitting it to be expoſed to publick Cenſure.

The

The Contents.

The First Part, *Page* 1.

I. THE *entrance into the Diſcourſe* Ibid.
ii. *The hateful Character given by ſome to certain Friends of* Theophilus *and* Philalethes, 7
iii. *An Argument of their being greatly abuſed in that Character,* 12
iv. *That Character due to the Broachers of* Hobbian *Doctrine,* 13
v. *But that Doctrine by none better confuted than by theſe men,* 14
vi. *That Preaching ſome of their Adverſaries Doctrines, might render them too well deſerving that Character, in the Judgment of over-critical Perſons,* ibid.
vii. *Another Argument that they are abuſed,* 18
viii. Theophilus *undertaketh impartially to Repreſent them,* 20
ix. *Of their Practiſes,* 22
x. *Of their Conformity to the Eccleſiaſtical Laws,* 23

xi. *The unreasonableness of Censuring Men upon the account of their Conformity,* 24
xii. *Of their Conversation,* 37
xiii. *Of their Preaching,* 40
xiv. *Of their Preaching the Reasonableness of the Christian Precepts,* 42
xv. *Of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion,* ibid.
xvi. 1 Cor. 2. 14. *considered,* 43
xvii. *One advantage that is gotten by demonstrating the Reasonableness of Christian Duties,* 49
xviii. *The consideration of the goodness of the Doctrine of the Gospel, necessary to accompany that of Miracles to prove its Divine Authority,* ibid.
xix. *Of the Testimony of the Spirit to the Truth of Scripture,* 54
xx. Theophilus *his Opinion concerning the inward Testimony of the Spirit,* 56
xxi. *The believing of Divine Things, a Divine Faith, whatever the Motives thereunto are,* 58
xxii. *Of Moral Certainty,* 61
xxiii. *Of the Scripture bearing Testimony to it self,* 64
xxiv. *A second Advantage gotten by demonstrating the Reasonableness of the Precepts of the Gospel,* 66
xxv. *In what sence the Precepts of the Gospel are highly reasonable,* 69
xxvi. *A Description of Reason,* 70
xxvii. *The first Proposition, shewing in what sence the*

the Precepts of the Gospel are reasonable, with a brief Demonstration that they are so, 71
xxviii. *The Design of the Christian Religion,* 72
xxix. *The Second Proposition,* ibid.
xxx. *A more particular demonstration of the Reasonableness of the Gospel Precepts,* 75
xxxi. *Almost all the Duties injoyned in the Gospel, commended by Heathens,* 80
xxxii. *Those vindicated from making the Gospel but a little better than a meer Natural Religion, that assert that Reason alone is able to prompt to us most of the Duties therein injoyned,* 86
xxxiii. *Wherein the Gospel excelleth all other Religions,* 88
xxxiv. *To say that what the Gospel requireth, is most suteable to Reason, is highly to commend it,* &c. 91
xxxv. *Of their Preaching the Reasonableness of the Points of meer belief,* 93
xxxvi. *All the Points of meer belief to be consistent with Reason sometimes proved by them,* 94
xxxvii. *That they do not endeavour to level all such Points with mens Capacities,* 95
xxxviii. *That they acknowledge incomprehensible Mysteries in the Christian Religion,* ibid.
xxxix. *That they prove the Consistency of such Points with Reason, as they are delivered in the* Scripture *only,* 97
xl. *That they assert many Speculative Points to be also* suteable *to the Dictates of Reason,* ibid.

xli. *An Argument drawn from Notions of the Heathens, to prove the most weighty Points of Faith suteable to the Dictates of* Reason, 98
xlii. *Of their Style in Preaching,* 104
xliii. *Of their making Doctrines intelligible,* 105
xliv. *A sort of men that are Obscurers of the Gospel,* ibid.
xlv. *Another sort of such,* 106
xlvi. *Of the Perspicuity of Scripture,* 108
xlvii. *Their Opinion of powerful Preaching,* 112
xlviii. *Of Carnal and Spiritual* Reason, 113
xlix. *A farther account of their Preaching,* 114
l. *Of their being accused of Preaching up only a Moral* Righteousness, 117
li. *In what sence they do not so, and in what sence they do,* ibid. & 118
lii. *No difference betwixt Evangelical* Righteousness, *and that which is the best sence Moral,* 119
liii. *To work in us such a Moral* Righteousness, *the Design of the Gospel,* 120
liv. *A* Righteousness *in no sence Moral a Contradiction,* 124
lv. *Of Imputative* Righteousness, *and in what sence they believe and Preach it,* 126
lvi. *Their notion of Christ's imputed* Righteousnesse, ibid.
lvii. *A false notion of it,* 128
lviii. *The first Mistake in that Notion,* 129
lix. *The second Mistake,* ibid.

lx. *A false definition of Faith they Confute in their Preaching,* 130
lxi. *Christ's imputed* Righteousnesse *no Scripture Phrase,* 133
lxii. *Some Verses in the fourth to the* Romans *considered,* ibid.
lxiii. *St.* James 2. 23. *considered,* 135
lxiv. Philippians 3. 9. *considered,* 137
lxv. *As high a favour to be dealt with, as if we were perfectly* Righteous *as to be so esteemed,* 139
lxvi. *The dangerous consequence of the* Antinomian *Doctrine about Imputed* Righteousnes, 141
lxvii. *The* Antinomians *Opinion of Sin,* 143
lxviii. Theophilus *his Charity for some* Antinomians, 146
lxix. *A Defective Definition of Faith that those Divines Preach against, and the ill consequence of it,* 148
lxx. *A full Definition of Faith ill applyed to the business of Justifying,* 154
lxxi. *A full and plain Definition of Faith used by those Preachers,* 157
lxxii. *Of that Doctrine of those Preachers; that Faith justifyeth, as it implyeth Obedience,* 159
lxxiii. *An Argument to prove that Faith justifieth as it receiveth Christ* quà *Lord, as well as* quà *Saviour,* 160
lxxiv. *The Act of receiving Christ* quà *Lord to go before that of receiving him* quà *Priest,* 161
lxxv. *How Faith is distinguished from* Repentance, *and*

and other vertues in the busines of Justification, 162

lxxvi. *Why Justification is mostly ascribed to Faith,* 164

lxxvii. *Two Acceptations of the Word Faith,* ibid.

lxxviii. *The vertue of Faith variously expressed in Scripture,* ibid.

lxxix. *How Faith justifieth,* 165

lxxx. *The Covenant of Grace conditional,* 167

lxxxi. Hebrews 8. 10. *considered,* 168

lxxxii. *Men not without all power to cooperate with with God's Grace in their Conversion,* 174

lxxxiii. *A middle way to be taken in giving account of Mens Conversion,* 175

lxxxiv. *Faith the Condition of the New Covenant,* ibid.

lxxxv. *Of their being accused for the foregoing Doctrine, as holding Justification by Works, and Enemies to God's Grace,* 176

lxxxvi. *A Digression concerning censuring men upon the account of their Opinions,* ibid.

lxxxvii. *A vindication of the foregoing account of Faith justifying from being opposite to free Grace,* 180

lxxxviii. *A vindication of that Doctrine, from asserting Justification by Works in St.* Paul's *sence,* 186

lxxxix. *By Works, when opposed to Grace or Faith, New Obedience never meant,* 188

xc. *No Crime to hold Justification by Works in St.* James *his sence,* ibid.

xci. *St.*

xci. *St.* Pauls *Language not to be preferred before St.* James *his*, 189

The Second Part. 190

i. *A more distinct Account of their Opinions*, ibid.
ii. *Of their Judgment in Doctrinals*, 191
iii. *In what sence the Church of* England *imposeth Subscription to the* 39 *Articles*, ibid.
iv. *The Lord Primate of* Ireland *his Testimony*, ibid.
v. *What Doctrines they most endeavour to Confute*, 192
vi. Philalethes *his Representation of Gods Nature*, 193
vii. *Consequences of Opinions not to be charged on all those that hold them*, 198
viii. *That they set themselves against the Doctrine of Gods absolute decreeing Mens Sin and Misery*, 199
ix. *That those two are not to be separated*, 200
x. *That those Doctrines make their Defenders assert two Wills in God; and the one contrary to the other, by which means other sad Consequences also follow*, 202
xi. *Of opposing Gods Secret to his Revealed Will*, 206
xii. *That we must resolve to believe nothing at all, if we may believe nothing against which we cannot answer all Objections*, 210
xiii. *That the forementioned Doctrine evidently contradicts our natural Notions*, 213

xiv. *Which is the ſafeſt courſe in reconciling ſeemingly contradictory Scriptures,* 216
xv. Theophilus *can believe no ſence of Scripture that doth evidently contradict ſelf-evident Notions,* 217
xvi. *Of that Opinion, That whatſoever God doth, is therefore good and juſt becauſe He doth it,* 218
xvii. *What is the Motive inducing the good men of that Perſwaſion to go that way,* 223
xviii. *Thoſe Divines middle way between the* Calviniſts *and* Remonſtrants, 228
xix. *This way propoſed by* Catharinus *at the Council of* Trent, 231
xx. *How it comes to paſs that this way for ſome Ages had feweſt Friends,* 232
xxi. *This Way, a great eaſe to* Theophilus *his Mind,* 233
xxii. Philalethes *no leſs beholden to it: which cauſeth* Theophilus *to ask him ſome Queſtions,* 236
xxiii. *Of Free Will.* 239
xxiv. *Of the State of the Heathens,* 249
xxv. *That God hath wayes, though they may be perfectly unknown to us, to clear the Juſtice and Goodneſs of his Dealings with all Mankind,* 254
xxvi. *Whether what muſt be acknowledged to defend that middle Way, tends to encourage ſecurity, &c.* 256
xxvii. *That the Doctrine diſcourſed againſt doth a world of miſchief,* 257

xxviii. *The Test by which* Theophilus *examines Controverted Points,* 260
xxix. *Of the great obscurity of St.* Paul's *Style in many places, and the causes of it,* 261
xxx. *A Paraphrase upon several Verses, of the ninth to the* Romans, 263
xxxi. *How God is said to harden sinners,* 275
xxxii. Philalethes *offereth another Interpretation of the* 19th *and* 20th *Verses,* 284
xxxiii. *That the most Ancient Fathers were Enemies to absolute Reprobation, with its Consomitants,* 288
xxxiv. *That the old* Gnosticks *were great Friends to it,* 291
xxxv. *Mr.* Joseph Mede's *Judgment concerning this Point,* 293
xxxvi. *The Church of* England *no favourer of it,* 294
xxxvii. *The Moderation of those Divines in other Matters of Controversie, which* Theophilus *hath not time to insist upon, very remarkable,* 295
xxxviii. *None more disliked by them, than the Monopolizers of Truth to a Party,* 296
xxxix. *Infallibility in the best of Men or Churches, denyed by them,* 297
xl. *Of the Infallibility of the Church, and those* Protestants *that seem to be sticklers for it,* 298
xli. *Of Acquiescing in the four first Oecumenical Councils,* 300
xlii. *What Respect due to Councils,* 302
xliii. *The Church of* Englands *sence of General Councils,* 304
xliv. *The Determinations of our own Church, not to be opposed in Matters disputable,* 305
xlv. *An Argument that Christ intended us no Infallible Judge of Controversies,* 306
xlvi. *Private Christians promised Infallibility in the same*

ſenſe that the Church Repreſentative hath the promiſe of it, 307
xlvii. *Of Diſputacity,* 308
xlviii. *Of Friendly Diſputes,* ibid.
xlix. *The way to Peace,* ibid.
l. *The miſchief of contending for an Infallible Judge,* 309
li. *Forcing others to be of our mind Tyrannical,* ibid.
lii. *To condemn men for diſſenting from us unwarrantable,* 310
liii. *Of thoſe Divines Candor towards diſſenters from them,* 313
liv. *Of Mr.* Chillingworth's *Book,* 315
lv. *Of their Opinion concerning Fundamentals, and that they are not forward to give a Catalogue of them,* 316
lvi. *The uſe of the foregoing Principles,* 317
lvii. *That thoſe Divines procure to themſelves Enemies of divers ſorts by their endeavours to propagate theſe Principles,* 319

The Third Part. 322

i. *Their Judgment in Matters of Diſcipline,* ibid.
ii. *That they prefer* Epiſcopacy *to all other Forms of Church Government,* 323
iii. *How much eſſential to* Epiſcopacy, ibid.
iv. *That they unchurch not thoſe Churches that will not admit it, though they think it deſirable that all would,* 324

v. *Their*

v. *Their Opinion of the Power of the Civil Magistrate in Sacred Affairs,* 325
vi. *That the Civil Magistrate hath a Power both Legislative and Judiciary in Ecclesiastical Affairs,* ibid.
vii. *Their Opinion of the Authority of the Church,* 327
viii. *That they believe Magistrates are to be obeyed, when they command things inconvenient, if lawful,* 329
ix. *That they judge it unlawful for the People to take Arms against their Prince,* &c. *on any pretence,* 331
x. *That they are for shewing favour to Dissenters out of Conscience,* 332
xi. *Whom they conceive are not to be dealt with as men of tender Consciences,* 333
xii. Theophilus *presumes that they would be glad, if some things that most offend were removed,* &c. 334
xiii. Philalethes *his Opinion upon the whole Account,* 336
xiv. *Why the* Bigots *of the several Parties are mostly* their *Enemies,* 337
xv. *That it is pity there should be any distinction of Name between* Them, *and the* Moderate *Men of* some *Parties,* 339
xvi. *What Name they only desire to be known by,* 340

xvii. *That their Temper and Free Principles are of no late ſtanding*, &c. 341
xviii. *Why the Phariſees could not endure our Saviour*, ibid.
xix. *When the Temper and Spirit that hath been deſcribed, began to decay in the Chriſtian World*, 343
xx. *The Pope beholden to the Decay thereof for his Power*, 344
xxi. *That it is much revived in the* Proteſtant *Churches, though the Generality are ſtill greatly defective in it*, 345
xxii. *If the Inviſible Antichriſt were once fallen, the Viſible one would quickly follow*, ibid.
xxiii. *The Concluſion*, 346

Theophilus, a Lover of God.
Philalethes, a Lover of Truth.

ERRATA.

Page 27. line 13, read κατα. p. 165. l. 13. r. Make. p. 289. l. 24. r. 100.

A FREE DISCOURSE BETWEEN Two Intimate Friends, &c.

Philalethes.

MY deareſt *Theophilus*, the obſervation I have for ſome time made of the great change in your countenance, from that ſpriteful and chearful air I was wont with pleaſure there to behold, to a melancholy penſiveneſs and deep dejection, hath made me not a little ſolicitous concerning the cauſe: nor can I but entertain a great ſuſpicion, that it is no ordinary Misfortune that hath made ſuch an alteration in ſo well-compoſed, and excellently tempered a minde, as yours is. I. *The entrance into the Diſcourſe*

Part I.

Theophilus.

I am much obliged to you, my beſt Friend, for the good opinion you have conceived of me; which muſt be imputed not in the leaſt to mine own merit, but wholly to your goodneſs: for I aſſure you, my temper is as obnoxious to troubleſome impreſſions as other mens, how ſedate ſoever you are pleas'd to think it.

Philal. None doubtleſs may pretend, ſo well as your ſelf, to underſtand it: but if it be ſo impreſſible as you ſay, I have known you far better able to hide your infirmity then I perceive you now are.

Theoph. I ſay, *Philalethes*, no man can with leſs reaſon boaſt of *Stoiciſm*, then my ſelf: but were my ſoul the moſt unconcerned of any mortals, and as free from all diſturbing Paſſions, as is in this ſtate poſſible; that diſcompoſure of thoughts you read in my looks, you will

will not at all wonder at, when you have once understood the occasion. But I shall defer the satisfaction of your desire in acquainting you therewith, till I have informed you, that I have taken notice of as little serenity of late, in *your* aspect; as Critical as you are in observing *mine*: and have several times seen so thick a Cloud there, as made me conclude the distemper of *my* minde to be no whit greater than that of *yours*. Part *I.*

Philal. I see then that I am no less to seek in the Art of Dissembling then your self; and you shall presently acknowledge, that of us two, I am the more open-breasted: for though you have kept me hitherto in suspence, and delayed to let me learn the ground of *your* trouble; you shall not wait one minute for the knowledge of the true cause of *mine*. It is not to be attributed, *Theophilus*, to any personal evil, or

Part I. of a private concern; but to a very quick ſenſe of the moſt deplorable State of this our Church. It pains me to the heart, when I conſider to what a prodigious height, about matters of Religion, our feuds are grown; and how utterly averſe the too many Sects and Parties we are crumbled into are, to entertain thoughts of peace and accommodation. When I well weigh in my minde, what a rare Engine the Goſpel is, for the effecting the moſt hearty agreement and friendſhip among men imaginable, (wherein, I perſwade my ſelf, it fails not of happie ſucceſs, where it is ſincerely entertained) and then obſerve what a Make-bate it hath notwithſtanding proved, among the generality of our profeſſors of it; and occaſions, through their own moſt wretched folly and naughtineſs, the ſharpeſt Conteſts, and moſt bitter and irreconcileable Enmities: I finde I have more

more than enough to do, to govern my ſelf as I am ſenſible I ought, and to keep the inferiour faculties of my ſoul in ſubordination to its ſuperiour, as becomes a Man and Chriſtian, in the reſentment of it. Part I.

Theoph. Had you not the ambition, *Philalethes*, to be now beforehand with me in Friendſhip, and firſt to unboſome your ſelf to me; you had by this time received the very ſame account of that Melancholy that in me you ſpyed.

Philal. Though I could never give credit to the *Pythagorean* Doctrine of the Tranſmigration of ſouls into divers bodies, yet I could be almoſt tempted to fancie what is more ſtrange, namely, that our two bodies are at once informed by one and the ſame ſoul.

Theoph. This is not a thing ſo wonderful, as to incline me once to dream of ſuch an Hypotheſis, were it much leſs incredible than it is, to

Part I. enable me to give an account of it: for though, ſure enough, our ſouls are as diſtinct as other folks; yet they being conjoyned by the ſame principles and intereſt, I can much better underſtand how this you ſo admire at ſhould be, than how it came to paſs, that *Hippocrates* his Twins laugh'd and cry'd, liv'd and dy'd together. But, my good *Philalethes*, hath it not increaſed the diſquiet of your minde, to think what uſage ſome worthy Friends of ours (whom I know you have much heard of, though I ſuppoſe you are not ſo well acquainted with them as my ſelf) meet with from our hot and contentious Chriſtians? and how ill they are recompenſed by the ſeveral litigating and ſharply-conteſting Parties, for their induſtrious endeavours to make peace between them?

Philal. Yes, *Theophilus*, that it hath; and to my great trouble I have

Part I.

have often obſerved, that the Fierce men (as much at odds as they are among themſelvs) can too well agree in heaping Calumnies on theſe Gentlemen, and in giving them the worſt of Characters: In which dealing of theirs with *them*, they have imitated that of the Heathens with ſome of the Primitive Chriſtians; who firſt dreſſed them in Bears skins and then baited them. The world is not ſo depraved, nor do I think ever can be, as to reproach good men under that notion: that therefore theſe perſons may be cryed down with the greater ſhew of zeal, and that it may be looked upon as the intereſt of Religion to caſt an odium on them; I have heard them repreſented as a Generation of people that have revived the abominable principles of the old *Gnoſticks*; and that they are of thoſe long ſince extirpated Hereticks the natural and genuine off-ſpring.

II. *The hateful character given by ſome to certain Friends of* Theophilus & Philalethes.

Part I.

Theoph. You ſay very right, for they are repreſented as *ſuch* for all the world; we being told with much confidence, by thoſe that think themſelvs greatly affronted, if whatſoever drops from their mouths be not received as a Sacred Oracle, that they are a company of men that are prepared for the embracing of any Religion, & to renounce or ſubſcribe to any Doctrine, rather then incur the hazard of Perſecution; and that they eſteem him the onely Heretick that refuſeth to be of that Religion the King or State profeſſeth; or, at leaſt, this the moſt dangerous Hereſie, that Suffering is to be preferred before Sinning. They are characterized as people, whoſe onely Religion it is to temporize, & transform themſelves into any Shape for their Secular intereſts; and that judge no Doctrine ſo Saving, as that which obligeth to ſo complying and condeſcending a humour, as to become

all

all things to all men, that so by any means they may gain something: as I heard one once jear a most worthy person that is one of them, as he thought, no doubt, very wittily.

Philal. Have you not heard the Cholerick Gentlemen distinguish these persons, by a long Nick-name; which they have taught their tongues to pronounce as roundly, as if it were shorter then it is, by four or five syllables?

Theoph. Yes, *Philalethes*, oftener, I presume, then you have: for though we are both Country-men, and wonted more then most to a solitary life; yet *my* occasions call *me* abroad, and into variety of companies, more frequently then *yours* do *you*: where I hear, ever and anon, the word of a foot and half long sounded out with a great grace; and that not onely at Fires and Tables, but sometimes from *Pulpits* too: nay, and it accompanied good store of

other

Part I. other Bumbaſts, and little Witticiſms, in ſeaſoning, not long ſince, the ſtately *Oxonian* Theatre.

Philal. I am not ſo little skill'd in the language of the Beaſt, as to be ignorant of the derivation of that Long name: but I pray, *Theophilus*, what do thoſe that ſo pleaſe themſelvs with it mean by it?

Theoph. That I can tell you from their own mouths: for I have heard them give a deſcription of their *Latitudinarian*; and 'tis this ſhort one, *He is a Gentleman of a wide ſwallow.*

Philal. Very good! It ſeems then his *Conſcience* is the Seat of his Latitude, and that this name includes the forementioned Lovely Character.

Theoph. It does ſo. And thus as we have ſeen children make an ugly picture upon a wall, & then ſpit at it; or dreſs up a Puppet, and then make ſport with it: ſo thoſe, whom one might

might expect ſhould be better employed, make a deformed and miſſhapen Beaſt, and then worry their own creature. But if to be highly charged be a ſufficient evidence of Guilt, who can accuſe the enemies of the Primitive Chriſtians of barbarity in their carriage towards them? For it is well known that the imputations they lay under, were no better then thoſe of Atheiſm, the moſt beaſtly Inceſt, and bloudy Cruelty. Part I.

Phil. Nay, how can we then blame even our bleſſed *Saviour's* Judges, for pronouncing that Sentence they did againſt *him*, ſeeing the Crimes he was charged with, were of the fouleſt nature, and no leſs then Sorcery, Treaſon and Blaſphemy? But as confidently as theſe men are thus highly accuſed, and that by thoſe that pretend to be of all others beſt affected to that Religion, that is no leſs *peaceable* than it is *pure*, and

that

Part I.

that engageth its professors not easily to *think*, as well as not to *speak* ill of any; the little knowledge that I have of them makes me conclude, that it is no hard matter to prove, that their Accusers, in being *so*, declare themselves to have the *wide swallows* they condemn their Brethren for; and that so wide, as glibly to down with Camels, as much as one sort of them may seem to strain at Gnats.

III. *An Argument of their being greatly abused in that Character.*

Theoph. You say well; there is indeed no difficulty in proving it: For what unprejudiced person can easily perswade himself to judge so very hardly of these men, that considers, that there are not any that have better than they, (I had almost said, so well) demonstrated and improved that Principle, which is the Foundation of all Religion, *viz. That Moral good and evil are not onely* such, *because God commands the one, and forbids the other; but because*

because the things themselves are so essentially and unalterably. That there is an eternal Reason, why that which is good should be so and required, and why that which is evil should be so and forbidden; which depends not so much on the divine will *as the divine* nature.

Philal. This is to me a demonstration that they are most injuriously represented. I must confess, had they broached such Doctrine as the *Hobbists* propagate, *viz.. That all Moral righteousness is founded in the law of the Civil Magistrate: That the holy Scriptures are obliging by vertue onely of a Civil Sanction: That whatsoever Magistrates command, their Subjects are bound to submit to, notwithstanding contrary to Divine Moral laws:* I say, had they published such Doctrine, I should then my self most freely subscribe to the worst that hath been said of them.

IV. *That Character due to the broachers of* Hobbian *Doctrine.*

Theoph.

Part I.

Theoph. And so should I too; but those accursed Principles (for I can give them no better Epithet) were never more solidly confuted, than by these men. Nay, they might have rendered themselvs too liable to the hardest Censures of men, more *judicious* and *critical*, than *ingennous* and *charitable*; had they preached those doctrines, that not a few of those very people that make the loudest out-cries against them have formerly, and I have cause to fear do still instruct their credulous disciples in: whom yet neither *I* nor *they* dare pass an hard sentence against, upon that account; because we *hope*, and *believe* also, that they do not discern the natural consequences of their Principles. But I for my own part must needs confess, that should I think as they profess to do in several points, I should be in no small danger of being, in their hateful sense, a man of *Latitude*. I shall

V. *But that doctrine by none better confuted then by these men.*

VI. *That preaching some of their adversaries doctrines might render them too well deserving that character in the judgment of over-critical persons.*

ſhall onely inſtance in one of thoſe Doctrines, that paſs for currant among many of theſe ſevere Cenſurers; *viz. That which is oppoſite to that I ſaid thoſe perſons have ſo rarely well demonſtrated.* You know that not a few of their Adverſaries do make the will of God the onely meaſure of good and evil; and will by no means admit that diſtinction, *Some things are good becauſe commanded, other things are commanded becauſe good*; and ſo on the contrary.

Philal. No, I know they will not. I was my ſelf once told by a too hot Divine, that yet was in ſome things more ſober than many of them, when I delivered that diſtinction, and expreſſed my approbation of it, that I ſpake blaſphemy.

Theoph. 'Tis very likely; *I* have alſo, and that more than once, been ſhent with great gravity upon the very ſame account. However, *Philalethes,*

Part I. *lalethes*, God forbid that we should so far imitate the weakness of the men we blame, as to say that holding the forementioned Principle, they must all of them of necessity be of that Dutch Gentleman *Zeglovius* his minde, who hath impudently told the world in Print, that God may please, out of the absolute Soveraignty of his will, to command all that wickedness he hath forbidden, and forbid all that holiness he hath commanded. Nor dare I say, or yet suspect, that they believe that we can have no assurance, that God will perform either his threatnings or promises; and that he doth not *will* to deceive his creatures in making the one and the other; which deception, if he *wills* it, must needs be good: nor that when they say that God is of a holy nature, they mean no more, than that he cannot abide to be disobeyed; which is but a slender commendation: yet who seeth not,

not, that will but give himself leave to think at all freely, that these are consequences inevitably following from that their Doctrine? which, as I said, have the men they look upon as such Debauchies, divers of them most excellently discovered the falsity of; and most convincingly proved the unchangeable natures, and eternal laws and differences of good and evil: and that it is the most horrid Contradiction to assert, that God can *will* that his creatures should not be just and righteous, good and holy; and, those of them that I know, take occasion frequently, to declare their abhorrence of that opinion, with all that are derived from it, or of kin to it. Now, *Philalethes*, what can their design, think you, be in thus doing? can they manage any other than that of convincing men of the indispensable obligation that lieth upon them, to love and prosecute all goodness, and

Part I. to ſhun and abominate all ſin? what other end can they ſerve by this means, beſides rendering the Religion of Chriſt Jeſus moſt amiable, and effectual as to its great intent?

VII. *Another Argument that they are abuſed.*

Philal. For my part, I am not able to imagine, how they can propoſe to themſelvs any other: And what you ſaid laſt, brings to my remembrance another Argument that will convince any candid perſon, that it is, at leaſt, moſt highly *probable*, that they are, in being repreſented as was ſaid, very unjuſtly dealt with, *viz.* That none have with more ſtrength of reaſon demonſtrated, that the grand deſigne of the Goſpel is to make men good: not to intoxicate their brains with notions, or furniſh their heads with a ſyſteme of opinions; but to reform mens lives, and purifie their natures: which noble principle together with the former, doth utterly overthrow

that

that *Latitudinarianiſm* they are accuſed of, as he muſt be blind, or ſhut his eyes, that doth not ſee it: And if it were well minded and improved by our angry men, it would, no queſtion, turn the edge of their zeal quite another way; and convince them, that there are too many things they lay a heavier ſtreſs upon, than they can ever bear. Part I.

Theoph. This was excellently well obſerved of you; and as you ſay, if the deſigne of the Goſpel were well underſtood, and as well conſidered by thoſe men, they would think their precious time may be much more profitably ſpent, than in contending about meer ſpeculations, or ſuch practices as neither ſerve nor diſſerve that deſigne; and have no influence either into the bettering or depraving the ſouls of men.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, I could be glad to know more diſtinctly than I do, how it comes to paſs, that

Part I. it is the ill fate of thoſe our Friends, to have the worſt character given them, by the *Rigid men* of all Perſwaſions: what unluckie ſtars are they born under, that, of all others, they ſhould meet with the worſt uſage, and fouleſt play; if they have given no occaſion to thoſe people to think and ſpeak ſo ill of them; nor by any default of their own, have expoſed and laid themſelves open to their cenſures?

VIII. Theophilus *undertaketh impartialy to repreſent them*

Theoph. I ſhall willingly gratifie you in this requeſt; which I will do in giving you an impartial repreſentation of them; wherein by the way, as we paſs along, you will clearly perceive, what you are already, I know, inclined to believe; that ſome things, at leaſt, not *blameworthy*, and others very highly deſerving praiſe, have made them the objects of ſo much ſpite; and that 'tis occaſioned by none but ſuch things.

Philal.

Philal. The account in general, that from men worthy to be credited I have had of them, and particularly that they are *persons of great Moderation*, hath prepared me, were you a perfect ſtranger, not to queſtion your veracity, let the character be never ſo good you ſhall give of them.

Theoph. I aſſure you, *Philalethes*, I am under no temptation, to tell you a tittle more than I know to be true concerning them: nor do I think it can be my intereſt to tell, at any time, a lye for God himſelf.

Philal. You might have reſerved this, for one to whom you are leſs known, than you are to me; and therefore, I pray proceed: but if you pleaſe, I will make ſo bold as to ſet you your Method; and deſire you firſt to give an account of their *Practices*, and then of their *Opinions*.

Theoph. You may, if you will,

Part I. call this *freedom*, which I acknowledge a great *favour*, but by no means *boldness*: And the Order you prescribe I shall as willingly proceed in, as if it had been mine own choice; but I will not promise you to keep my self over-exactly to it, and never to confound these two.

Philal. I do not expect you should.

IX. *Of their Practices.*

Theoph. Well then, *Philalethes*, as to their *Practices*; the familiarity that divers of them have honoured me with, assures me, that there are none among whom more true goodness is to be found, than is in them observable. Nor have their aspersers, as I can learn, ever convicted any of them, as persons offensive in their behaviour either towards God or men: nor can I tell, that any of those that are *most* maligned, have been so much as *accused* of such actions in particular, as are plain and

un-

undoubted transgressions of the first or second Table. Part I.

Philal. I perceive you put an Emphasis upon *undoubted*; and that therefore they are charged with those things, that their Adversaries *judge* Transgressions of the one or the other Table.

Theoph. The reason of that Emphasis you have well guessed at; for they are accused of some such things as divers look upon as breaches of the first Table, and particularly of the second Commandment; which are by others esteemed not onely not *so*, but in certain cases to be so far from being prohibited, that they are their *duty*. In short, the grand fault that is found by some in their practice, is their *Conformity* to the present Ecclesiastical Laws; which enjoyn some Rites in the Worship of God, which there is no express warrant from the Scriptures for. But whether this be well or ill

X. *Of their Conformity to the Ecclesiastical Laws.*

Part I. done of them, I must not now stand to determine.

Philal. Nor will I desire you; it being a Controversie that will take up too much time; and besides, the driest and most unpleasant that ever I engaged in.

Theoph. I have the same opinion of it; and therefore you shall not *hire* me to consent to the spending of any part of the time we have together upon such an Argument. All that need be done now, will be to consider whether the persons we are discoursing of, can possibly be guilty of so great an offence in their *Conformity*, as may not admit a charitable interpretation. For none can think, except such as are grosly silly, that it is indisputable that the matters now enjoyned are unlawful.

XI. *The unreasonableness of censuring men upon the account of their Conformity.*

Philal. Those must be very ignorant that so judge; when as men, as famous both for Learning and Piety as the Church of *England* hath

ever

ever been bleſſed with, have both by their own *Conformity* declared their allowance of them, and alſo defended their Lawfulneſs, againſt thoſe of a contrary perſwaſion. Part I.

Theoph. Nay more than ſo, *Philalethes*, you know that divers of the moſt eminent Proteſtant Divines of the beſt Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, ſuch as *Calvin*, *Beza*, *Zanchy*, and others, have declared their judgements for Conformity to them; and ſome of them, their earneſt deſire, that the Miniſters of this Church would comply with the will of their Governours in obſerving them, while they ſhall think it fit to impoſe them.

Philal. I am not ignorant of it: And me-thinks the Authority of thoſe men, who were our great Champions in the Anti-Romane Cauſe, ſhould be of no ſmall account with us all; but much leſs contemned by any of us.

Theoph.

Part I.

Theoph. Me-thinks it ſhould not; there being *this* moreover to ſay for their being competent judges in the caſe, that they were not onely men of great Learning and Godlineſs, but alſo unintereſted; and therefore under no Temptation of being byaſſed in their judgements in this particular. So that I ſay, It is a moſt reaſonable *poſtulatum*, that Conformity to the preſent enjoyned Rites, may be by thoſe that oppoſe it, acknowledged not to be ſo *plainly*, at leaſt, condemned, but that very wiſe and good men may not ſee it ſo to be: and therefore may judge it not onely *lawful* to conform, but alſo *their duty* ſo long as they perſiſt in that opinion.

Philal. I think it a very clear caſe, that the Conformiſts Adverſaries have ſufficient reaſon to deſire, and take kindly the ſame favourable thoughts of *their* Nonconformity; they well knowing how obnoxious

it

it hath been to an ill construction, and hard censures: Nor can they be ignorant what a black and odious character is by some men given themselvs; wherein those have paid divers of them in their own coyn, and measured to them with the same measure, wherewith they have meted, to those our Friends we are speaking of, in an especial manner, and more than to any other Conformable persons. Part I.

Theoph. What you say is most true; but yet I must tell you, that these friends of ours, (and I thank you for giving me this occasion) though, as you said, most provoked, are not in the number of those Warm Gentlemen of the other extreme; but, as I have often observed, they express great candor towards them.

Philal. I am glad to hear it; and that they are so wise men, and good Christians, as not to return censures for

Part I. for cenſures, and evil for evil. Nor can I well conceive how any ingenuouſly-minded perſon can admit ſo much as an hard *thought* of any, meerly upon the account of their not being of his minde, in matters that have been controverted, as theſe things have been, between men of confeſſedly-great worth and goodneſs. I declare for my part, and I care not who knows it, that I love with my heart a ſober and peaceably minded Nonconformiſt, as much Conformiſt as I am my ſelf.

Theoph. Gods bleſſing on your heart for that, *Philalethes*, and I alſo do freely declare the ſame, and that I think him never the worſe man that is ſo, ſuppoſing I perceive him conſcientious in other matters; and particularly that he is not of a cenſorious, ſeditious, and tumultuous ſpirit; but yet ſuch I would not *hate* neither, but pitie and pray for them. But now, do you not think

it

it unaccountably ſtrange, that thoſe our Friends, upon the ſcore of their Conformity, ſhould not be ſo much cenſured as erroneous and miſtaken as men of no conſcience; as if it were as plainly prohibited as Murther, Adultery, and the groſſeſt ſins? Part I.

Philal. I cannot think otherwiſe; but yet 'tis not more ſtrange then it is true, as I my ſelf alſo well know. For I happened but the other day upon a Book written by a Divine, that is of a Separated party, and looking into it, chanced to light upon an oppoſition of the Conformiſts to the *three children*; and *Theſe* being commended for their Heroick reſolution, rather to be thrown into the fiery furnace than to ſerve the Kings Gods, and worſhip the Image which he had ſet up; he next falls bewailing *Thoſe*, in theſe words: *How many in this hour of temptation, are caught in this enſnaring tryal!*

Part I.

tryal! What say some? Come, let us rather conform to the Ceremonies, than lose our Liberties; rather let us bow at the name of Jesus, than lose all for the sake of Jesus; it is better to baptize with the Cross, than to bear the cross; and to wear a Surplice, than to pinch our carcase. Thus many (it is to be feared) destroy their consciences to keep their places. And so he goes on talking after that rate. And though he qualifieth his Censure with an [*it is to be feared*] yet he plainly supposeth, that to use the Ceremonies of our Church is as unquestionably sinful, as to worship false Gods, and fall down to graven images: and therefore, notwithstanding that Parenthesis, he endeavours to make his Readers *conclude* rather than *fear*, that Conformists destroy their Consciences, (that is, those of them that he thinks had ever any) to keep their Places. Nay, three or four lines *after*, as he doth also

also *before*, without mincing the matter, he positively asserts as much, in these words: *Alas poor souls, how are they fallen in the hour of temptation!*

Theoph. You have, I perceive, a very happie memory: for I my self some days since met also with the same Book and passage; and I dare say, you have been so faithful as to quote it word for word. But whether thus to judge be consistent with the ingenuity of a Christian; I leave to that Gentleman and his Brethren, in their cool bloud to consider. But I am sure if this be not a most manifest transgression of the law of Charity, it is no easie matter to transgress it. But let these men print or preach what they list, I am shrewdly tempted much to question, whether they so much declare their *own* thoughts, as what they would have their *people* think; it being their great interest, that themselvs

Part I. ſelvs ſhould be reputed the onely men, that have not ſhipwrackt faith and a good conſcience.

Philal. This ſounds like ſuch an uncharitable Cenſure, as you blame *them* for.

Theoph. I expected that reply; but there is too good reaſon thus to fear: for I profeſs it cannot enter into *my* head, that thoſe of them, that are men of competent Learning and Parts, ſhould ſuffer their tongues and pens ſo to laſh out, if there were not more of cunning than any thing elſe in it. For they muſt needs know as well as any body can tell them, let them make their Admirers believe what they will, that it is no eaſie matter to make it good, that the things upon the account of which they ſo aſperſe their Brethren, are againſt any Law of God: but yet the people muſt be born in hand, that they are ſo *plainly* ſinful, that he muſt needs ſhut his eyes againſt the

the light, that is not convinc'd they are so: or rather, that all knowing men, can not but *suspect* them at least, so to be; but most have so little of their self-denial, and zeal for Gods honour, as rather to yield to them than lose their Livings, and expose themselvs to sufferings. Part I.

Philal. You have sufficiently vindicated your self from uncharitable Censuring; for surely that cannot deserve so ill a name, which is grounded upon so good a reason as you have given.

Theoph. And I thank you, my Friend, that you gave me this occasion of purging my self from so foul and unchristian a crime.

Philal. And you have done it, as I said, very satisfactorily: for Prudence, no question, is a necessary ingredient in every virtue; nor could I ever think blinde charity to be more truly *so*, than blinde zeal.

Part I.

Theoph. But to proceed where we brake off. Is it not greatly to be wondered at, *Philalethes*, that theſe men will not afford thoſe that differ in their practice from them, in diſputable matters, any more favourable Title, than that of *people of proſtituted Conſciences*; let them live never ſo exactly according to all the notices of Gods will clearly expreſſed in his Word? which, as I ſaid, thoſe Friends of ours are ſo far from living in contradiction to, that I hear of no clamours againſt them upon that account; which I am confident I ſhould with both ears, if any thing of immorality did diſcover it ſelf in their converſations.

Philal. But now I think of it, don't you believe that there are thoſe Conformable perſons, that have given too good cauſe for ſuch a ſevere Cenſure?

Theoph. I don't think that any have done ſo, by their bare Conformity:

mity: but whereas there are those that in all our Changes, have been observed to be zealous still, for that which was most countenanced by the Authority that bare the sway; and have been taken notice of to leap out of one extreme into another; that is, from the hight of *Fanaticism* to that of *Conformity*; these, *I* confess, may thank themselvs for the hard words that are heapt upon them; but they did not merit them, or gave occasion for them, by their meer Conforming: their former actings might have rendered their Honesty too liable to suspicion, though they had never Conformed; nor may their doing what is now enjoyned, considered as such, adde to the suspicion; but onely considered as diametrically opposite to former actings. And now *I* have this occasion, *I* must tell you, that *I* know none of our Friends in the number of those, that have merited

Part I.

Part I. the opprobrious name of *Turncoats*. But under the late Uſurpers, they did ſo behave themſelvs, as that ſome of them were great Sufferers for his Majeſtie and the Church; and the reſt of thoſe I was acquainted with, though they were ſo *prudent* as to keep as much as they could out of harms way, and not to expoſe themſelvs to needleſs ſufferings, and ſuch of which there could come no good; yet were they no leſs *conſciencious*, and had a care to preſerve themſelvs unſpotted from the guilt of the then wilde extravagances.

Philal. You have told me no more, than I have often before heard; but I am glad of its confirmation from your mouth. I pray pardon my occaſioning ſo many digreſſions from the main buſineſs, and be pleaſed now again to return to it.

Theoph. You ſhall not have my *pardon*, but *thanks*, for the digreſ-

ſions

sions you have occasioned; they being none of them, I think, impertinent. To go on then: They are not onely not *scandalous*, but very *lovely* also in their behaviour, and greatly *obliging*. I never in any one *sort* of men observed so much of openheartedness and ingenuity, freedom, sociableness, and affability, as in *these* generally. They have nothing of that Crabbed austerity, foolish affectation, or sullen gravity that render too many of their Censurers to *wise men* not a little contemptible. But as the Pharisees bare our Saviour a grudge, upon the account of his being contrary to *their* humour in this very particular; so I have reason to believe, that by this means, these persons do not a little distaste divers of their Adversaries, because they look so unlike them, and condemn those their follies, by a quite contrary carriage. But with any Sarcastical smartness

XII. *Of their Conversation.*

Part I. to perstringe those fooleries, which some of them have done, is looked on as an expression of a profane spirit: as if to dislike that which makes Religion ridiculous, were to be an enemy to Religion it self.

Philal. Nay, I have thought, that there is too much cause to suspect, that what they themselvs cannot but acknowledge very commendable in those our Friends, is a great motive to them, so much the more to traduce them; as being jealous that they may thereby gain with many too great esteem. For there was one, some time since, that took occasion to commend a Reverend and most worthy person that is called by the Long name, to an eminent Pastor of a Separated Congregation in *London*, from whom he received this answer; *That Jesus Christ hath not in this Nation a greater enemy; and that the goodness of his life was that which put him into a capacity*

of

of doing so much the more mischief.

Theoph. The story you have told me, I should have looked upon as not incredible, had a less faithworthy person related it than your self. For I have often observed that Scandalous Ministers, of which there are too many, the more is the pity (though the number of them is computed by those that gladly take all advantages to bespatter and fling dirt in the faces of their Civil and Ecclesiastical Governours, to be far greater than I am verily perswaded it is) I say, I have often observed, that *scandalous* Ministers have the good luck better to escape the tongues of our Carping people, than the most painful and conscientious.

Philal. Any man may, if he will, make this observation: And truly I have too good reason to fear, that not a few of those men are more sorry that all Conforming Ministers

Part I.

are not persons of debauched lives, than that any are so: for if they hear but an ugly tale of any one of them, they never stand to examine whether it be true or false, but with great greedinesse catch at it, and send it flying.

XIII. *Of their Preaching.*

Theoph. Would you have me, in the next place, to inform you, how those Divines in their *Pulpits* demean themselvs; I dare affirm, that if our Separating people would be but perswaded to make their own ears judges, and for some time deign to be their Auditors, if they could also leave all prejudice behinde them, they would confess that they cannot in any of their private Meetings, at least *better* spend their time. *I* am sure it must be their *own* fault, if their experience doth not convince them, that there are no Preachers by whom they may gain more real profit. For none can give their hearers better instructions, or back them

them on with more cogent and effectual motives and arguments than *they* do. I have my ſelf been as conſtant a hearer of them (before I betook my ſelf to this ſolitary way of living) as any man: but never was my judgement more convinced, my will perſwaded, nor my affections more powerfully wrought upon, by any Sermons than by theirs. I found that in their Diſcourſes generally, they handled thoſe ſubjects that are of weightieſt and moſt neceſſary importance: I mean ſuch as have the greateſt influence into the reformation of mens lives, and purification of their ſouls: Nor had I ever ſo lovely an *idæa* of the divine *nature*, which is the moſt powerful incentive to obedience to the divine *will*, nor ſo clear a ſenſe of the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, the Reaſonableneſs of its precepts, the nobleneſs and generoſity of its deſigne, and its admirable fitneſs for

the

Part I.

the accomplishment of it; as, through the blessing of God, I have gained by the hearing of these men.

XIV. *Of their preaching the Reasonableness of the Christian precepts.*

Philal. You say, *Theophilus*, that you have gained by these men a clearer sense of the Reasonableness of the Gospel-precepts; there are many now-a-days that will con a Preacher little thanks, for insisting on that Topick: for they tell us very weakly, that onely *Faith* is to be set on work in matters of Religion, not *Reason*.

XV. *Of the use of Reason in matters of Religion.*

Theoph. Very weakly indeed: it seems those men would have us believe our Religion we know not why; and so we shall be *wise* believers in the mean time. Were I of their opinion, I doubt I should be shrewdly tempted to prefer no one Religion before another; and to think none so absurd, as that I should need to stick, upon that account, at entertaining it.

Philal. I greatly fear that *Mahometanism*

metaniſm it ſelf would bid as fair for my belief, as Chriſtianity, did I think as they do. But I am ſo far from imagining that *Reaſon* hath nothing to do in Religion, that I am moſt aſſured, that it is no-where to ſo good purpoſe employed as it is there. But how do you underſtand that place, which theſe enemies of Reaſon, I think, lay the *greateſt* ſtreſs on, in their cavils againſt it, *viz.* *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs to him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* Where, by the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος, which is (I know not why) tranſlated the *natural man*, they underſtand the *Rational*; or as ſome of them love to word it, the *Souly man*, but mean the ſame thing.

Part I.

XVI. 1 Cor. 2. 14. *conſidered.*

Theoph. Thoſe words of S. *Paul* are ſtrangely miſunderſtood by them; nor is there any thing in them

Part I. them, that, with the least shew of probability, tends to serve those mens absurd Hypothesis. For the word ψύχικος doth properly signifie *Animalis*; and this word never signifieth a *Souly man* in their sense, but in the quite contrary. For an *Animal man* is such a one, as gives himself up to the government of his inferiour Faculties; or a *carnal sensual man*: so that he is so far from being a man of Reason, that he is most irrational. 'Tis such a man as this, that the Apostle saith, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; he being drowned in sensuality, can have no *gusto* of, cannot relish such things; that is, while he remains so. *They are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them*; he can have no right understanding, no clear perception of them; and they sound in his ears like very *odde* things also. And it is to be imputed to *this*, that he understands by his *Affections* more

more than by his *Reaſon* ; like the Wolf in the Fable, that went to School to learn to Spell, whatſoever letters were told him, becauſe he minded nothing but his belly, he could never make any thing but *Agnus* of them. *He cannot know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned* ; that is, by vertue of a higher principle than that which is predominant in this man ; who is, as was ſaid, a meer fleſhly wretch. So that this place is ſo far from condemning the uſe of Reaſon in the matters of our Faith, that the *neceſſity* thereof in thoſe things is rather to be *concluded* from it; and that men cannot receive the things of Gods Spirit, till by the Aſſiſtance thereof, their Reaſon hath regained its authority, and be able to keep under their bruitiſh affections. Part I.

Philal. But they ſay, that we muſt believe the Scriptures, not becauſe Reaſon tells us they are true,

Part I. true, but becauſe they are Gods Word.

Theoph. I perceive you are hard put to it, to retain your wonted gravity in propounding this Objection; but however, I will very gravely anſwer you. If we muſt believe the Scriptures becauſe they are Gods Word, then I trow there is a reaſon on which we are to found our Faith, and that a good one too. But again, why muſt we believe what God ſaith to be true? muſt we believe this becauſe we believe it? None ſure will ſpeak ſo abſurdly: but whatſoever anſwer theſe men will give to that Queſtion, it is apparent that this is grounded upon a principle of *Reaſon* alſo, than which there is none more evident, *viz. That God cannot lye.*

Philal. I preſume that they themſelvs would give that anſwer.

Theoph. Then they would give another Reaſon; and ſo ſtill contradict

tradict their own Doctrine.

Philal. But they will tell you, that all is at last resolved into Gods meer testimony: for we must believe that he cannot lye, because he himself hath said so.

Theoph. And what if he had never said so? what they would do I will not undertake to conjecture; but *I* should not therefore have one jot the less believed it. For Gods saying that he cannot lye, cannot be a sufficient argument to me to believe it, if I did not know that to lye is unworthy of God, and dis-becoming him: for how else could I tell, but that he designed to deceive me in that very saying that he cannot lye? This therefore is the reason why I doubt not of that great truth, because the reason of my minde tells me, that God must be a Being absolutely perfect, or he can't be God; and being so, it tells me that he cannot be without any

moral,

Part I. *moral*, no more than *phyſical* perfections; and to *lye*, the ſame Reaſon of my minde aſſures me, is a moral imperfection.

Philal. This no man can once doubt, that hath to any purpoſe employed his conſiderative faculty. But to perſonate theſe ſtiff oppoſers of Reaſon a little farther. To what purpoſe is it to go about to demonſtrate the Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian precepts, when it is once taken for granted, that they are divine? For nothing is more undoubted, than that whatſoever God commands, is therefore to be done, becauſe he commands it.

Theoph. That is a truth beyond all diſpute; and, by the way, let me tell you it is ſo, becauſe nothing is more highly reaſonable, than that God muſt be obeyed in all things. But however, I would have theſe men know, that to demonſtrate the Reaſonableneſs of the duties of

Chri-

Part I.

Christianity, is to do excellent service to the Christian Religion: for, First, it is no small confirmation of our Faith in the truth thereof, to understand the Reasonableness of what is therein enjoyned. I remember a good saying of *Origen* to this purpose; saith he to *Celsus*, in his third Book against him, *See whether or no the agreeableness of the precepts of our Faith with the common notions of humane nature, be not that which hath caused them to to be so readily entertained, by the ingenuous hearers of them.* And I must profess to you, *Philalethes*, that I lay no less weight upon the *goodness* that my Reason apprehendeth in the Doctrine the Gospel containeth, than upon the *Miracles* whereby 'twas confirmed. Nor do I believe the Miracles unaccompanied with that other consideration, a sufficiently-satisfying Argument that our Saviour was sent from God, as infi-

XVII. *One advantage that is gotten by demonstrating the Reasonableness of Christian duties.*

XVIII. *The consideration of the goodness of the doctrine of the Gospel necessary to accompany that of Miracles, to prove its divine authority.*

Part I. nitely wonderful as they were: but both theſe together moſt fully demonſtrate to us that Propoſition, and neither ſingly and abſtracted from each other.

Philal. I have, in this particular, thought as you do, ever ſince I well conſidered the three or four firſt verſes of the 13th Chapter of *Deuteronomy*; where God, by *Moſes*, ſaith thus to the children of *Iſrael*: *If there ariſe among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of dreams; and giveth thee a ſigne or a wonder; and the ſigne or the wonder come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, Let us go after other gods, and let us ſerve them: thou ſhalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your ſoul*, &c.

Theoph. That place is to very good

good purpose quoted by you; and these two things are plainly to be gathered from it: Part I.

First, That we are to consider the Doctrine it self, before we believe it to be of God, as well as the means of its confirmation.

Secondly, That God, for certain Reasons, may suffer wonders to be wrought, that is, such things as no man can give account how they should be effected by natural means, for the confirmation of a false Doctrine. And you have from thence rationally concluded what I now said, *viz.* That the goodness of the Doctrine is necessary to go along with the consideration of the Miracles whereby it was confirmed, to make them such an Argument as we may reasonably desire to induce us to entertain it as coming from God, and to receive *him* as Gods Son that brings it.

By the goodness of the Doctrine

Part I. I mean at leaſt its *negative* goodneſs; and ſay, that we ought to ſee that there be nothing in it, that is plainly unworthy of God to revele, or that containeth a manifeſt contradiction to any of his Attributes: but when *poſitive* goodneſs is alſo therein obſervable; that is, a high congruity and agreeableneſs with the Divine perfections; ſuch Doctrines make Miracles a more abundantly ſtrong argument, that the Preacher of them is no Impoſtor, but that he came from heaven upon Gods Meſſage.

Philal. But there are Learned men, that, diſtinguiſhing betwixt Miracles and Wonders, aſſert that the *former* are ſufficient motives of Credibility, though not the *latter.*

Theoph. Though theſe two ought to be diſtinguiſhed, yet I conceive, *that* diſtinction will ſignifie very little when applyed to this matter. For I cannot queſtion, but that it may

may lie within the compaſs of Evil Spirits power, to play ſuch Feats as no mortal man, though they ſhould be but *Wonders*, can be ſagacious and quick-ſighted enough to diſcern them from real *Miracles*. But when a perſon doth not onely perform moſt marveilous *works*, but alſo delivereth the moſt excellent *doctrine*, we have the greateſt aſſurance that can be from both together, that he came on Gods errand, and that the Religion he brought with him hath the Majeſtie of Heaven for its Author. We have reaſon to be no leſs aſſured of it, than that God is good: it being utterly unconceivable, that he ſhould lay before us ſuch an invincible Temptation to believe a Cheat and Falſity.

Philal. But there are thoſe, you know, that ſeem by their diſcourſe to lay no weight either upon the Miracles, or excellencie of the Doctrine; and are heard to cry up one-

Part I.

XIX. *Of the testimony of the Spirit to the truth of Scripture.*

ly the Testimony of the Spirit, as an Argument of the truth of Christianity, and of the divine Authority of those Books that contain it.

Theoph. There are so, *Philalethes*; but why do they distinguish between Miracles, and the Testimony of the Spirit? They are one and the same, without all doubt: for were they not performed by the power of the Holy Ghost? And therefore they were his Testimony or attestation to the truth of the Gospel.

Philal. But they mean an *internal* Testimony, or a secret powerful perswasion wrought *immediately*, in the souls of men, by the Holy Ghost.

Theoph. But those that say, that Credit cannot be given to the truth of the Gospel without this, make the Devils greater Unbelievers than we are from Scripture assured they are. And moreover, they seem to me

to assert that Christ and his Apostles might have spared *their* mighty works: for who will deny that the Spirits immediate testimony is alone abundantly sufficient for that purpose? But besides, those that talk thus, do apparently run in as gross a Circle, as that we accuse the Papists of. For as *they* prove the Scriptures by their Church, and their Church by the Scriptures; so *these* prove the Scriptures by this Testimony of the Holy Ghost, but then cannot prove so much as that there is any such person, but by the Scriptures. And once more, if there be any truth in this opinion, there is nothing to be done for the conviction of Infidels; for this internal Testimony can be an Argument to none but those that have it. Part I.

Philal. This I once urged to a certain Divine, who stiffly maintained that Conceit, and was angry with those that went about to prove

Part I.

the Authority of the Scriptures the other way; and he readily replied, that he knew no means to be used for the conviction of unbelievers, but *praying* for them.

Theoph. I commend that Gentlemans *ingenuity* in that concession; but nothing could be said more dishonourable to our excellent Religion, or that tends more to expose it to the scorn and contempt of those that bear no good-will to it.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, do you think then, that there is no such thing as this inward Testimony?

XX. Theophilus *his opinion concerning the inward testimony of the Spirit.*

Theoph. All I think as to this matter, I will briefly tell you. I say that the external and rational Motives of Credibility are as sufficient to give unprejudiced persons an undoubted belief of the truth of our Religion; as any rational Arguments are to perswade a man of the truth of any thing, he desireth satisfaction concerning: But yet because

cauſe our Grand Adverſary uſeth all Arts to make it as much ſuſpected as may be, and to ſhake our faith therein; and we are moreover in regard of the Contrariety of our Religion to our carnal and fleſhly intereſts very apt to be ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, (and we are not eaſily brought fully to believe what we would not have true) God is ready without all queſtion, to aſſiſt our weakneſs by his grace and Spirit, in this as well as other particulars, when humbly ſought to: but we have no reaſon to think that he doth this *ordinarily* in an immediate manner, but by bleſſing the uſe of means, *i. e.* the conſideration of the motives he hath given us to believe: And that he confirms our Faith, by giving us to ſee ſuch ſtrongly-convincing demonſtration in thoſe Arguments, and by ſo *cloſely* applying the evidence of them to our underſtandings, as that they come

Part I.

come to be even *perfectly* over-pow-er'd, and against all opposition to have full assent, and such as hath a powerful influence upon our practice, as it were, even *forced* from them. But if all the external motives will not make *one sufficient* Argument to perswade to assent, how could they render the unbelieving Jews inexcusable, as our Saviour several times assured them they would? Nay, how then could he *marvail* (as we read he did) at their unbelief?

Philal. But they will tell you, that to assent to the truth of the Scriptures from the forementioned motives, is no *divine* Faith.

XXI. *The believing of divine things a divine Faith, whatever the motives thereunto are.*

Theoph. But I dare tell them, that the believing of Divine things is a divine Faith, let the motives inducing thereunto be what they will; and that it is no unusual thing for the *Act* to receive its denomination from its *Object*. But with a divine

Faith

Faith in *their* ſenſe alſo, *we* no leſs than *they*, believe what is contained in the Scriptures true, *viz.* becauſe God that cannot lye hath reveled it: but that he hath *indeed* reveled it, the Miracles, as was ſaid, whereby this is confirmed, and the goodneſs of the Doctrine, (to which I may adde alſo, the completion of Prophecies, as being of no leſs conſideration than the Miracles) do aſſure us. And again, that ſuch Miracles as are recorded, were really wrought for the confirmation of the Goſpel, and likewiſe that the Doctrine contained in our Books, is that Goſpel that was confirmed by them; we may be convinced by as undeniable Arguments, as any matters of *fact* men have not ſeen with their own eyes can be proved by; and *ſo* undeniable, that he muſt needs be a moſt unreaſonable perſon, that requires better. Nay, he muſt reſolve, if he will be conſiſtent

with

Part I. with himself, to believe nothing he hath not himself seen. I will adde too, that whoever he be that is dissatisfied as to this matter, he doth *undoubtedly* believe hundreds of things, and thinks he should be unwise in questioning them, that have not the quarter part of the evidence that this hath; nay, I may say, not the twentieth part. If they please, *Philalethes*, to call it a *humane* faith to believe matters of fact upon the account of Tradition, I will not contend with them, but tell them plainly, that I like it never a jot the worse for being so; nor can I understand how any *wise* man should. But yet take notice too, that such a *degree* of faith concerning these matters of *fact* also, as hath a powerful operation upon our lives and souls, is imputed by *us*, no less than by *them*, to the grace of God, and his Holy Spirit; though not as operating in us in an *immediate* manner,

ner, as I ſaid, *ordinarily*; but in making the means effectual; and I hope they will acknowledge *this*, in the *beſt* of ſenſes, a *Divine* faith. Part I.

Philal. But they ſay, that onely a *moral* certainty can reſult from the evidence that is in the moſt uninterrupted and univerſal Tradition; and therefore how *cloſely* ſoever you tell us the Spirit of God applieth that evidence, this way of yours tends to make men no better than *morally* certain of the truth of our Religion. XXII. *Of moral certainty.*

Theoph. What a fault *that* is! our certainty thereof may be perfectly *undoubted*, as *moral* as it is. And I fear not to declare, that I do not deſire to be more *undoubtedly* aſſured that there were ſuch perſons as our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that they performed ſuch works, and preached ſuch Doctrines as we have on Record; and that the Books we call *Canonical*, were written by

Part I.

See the Learned Dr. *Stillingfleets* excellent Answer to the Lo. Archbp of *Canterbury*'s Adversary, p. 206.

those whose names they bear, than I have cause to be and am that there were such great Conquerors as *Alexander* and *Julius Cæsar*, which yet lived before our Saviour; or that those which pass for *Tully*'s Orations were *really* (for the *substance* of them at least) *his*, which yet are elder than the Gospel: but for all that my certainty of these things can be no more than *moral*; yet I do notwithstanding no more doubt of them, than I do of those things that are plainly objected to my Senses; for I do not *at all* doubt of them; and I should be laugh'd at as an arrant fool, if I did; but should I *deny* them, I should be thought a mad-man by all wise people. And yet let me tell you, that we have from Tradition a *greater* certainty, in some respect, of most of *those* particulars, than we have of *these*: for it hath been the interest of *many* that *those* should be false, but *so*

hath

hath it not been of *any* that *these* should be so. But the greatest enemies of the Christian Religion have not so much as attempted to disprove those, nay have taken all for *granted*, except one or two Miracles. Part I.

Philal. I have but a Moral assurance that there is such a City as *Rome* or *Venice*; or that there were such persons as Queen *Elizabeth* and King *James*: yet I should be a Brute, did I more question, whether there are such Cities, or were such persons, than I do, whether there be such a place as *London* or *Bristol*, where I have several times been, or whether there are such men as *Theophilus* and *Philalethes*.

Theoph. To be sure, so you would. Well, I wish that those men would shew us a more certain way of conviction concerning this matter of weightiest importance; and then see whether we would not,

Part I.

not, with great thanks, leave ours for it. But I fear me, in stead of so doing, should we give up our selves to their conduct, they would most sadly bewilder us; and in stead of setled and unshaken believers, make mere *Scepticks* of us, or what is worse.

XXIII. *Of the Scriptures bearing testimony to it self.*

Philal. There are others, *Theophilus*, that say that the Scripture is sufficiently able to convince men of its Divine authority, by the witness it can give to it self; or, to use their own Metaphorical expression, by the resplendency of its own light. So that he doth enough in order to his believing it to be Gods Word, that doth but acquaint himself with the contents thereof; which I think follows from that opinion.

Theoph. If these understand what they say, there is no difference betwixt *them* and *us*: for the Miracles and Goodness of the Doctrine, we prove the Scriptures Authority by;

by, we fetch onely out of the Scriptures themſelvs. And therefore, ſuppoſing we believe the matters of fact therein written, we ſay as they do, that we need no Argument to prove them Divine, but what is therein included. But if their meaning be, (as by their manner of expreſſing themſelvs one would think it ſhould) that there is ſuch a light in Scripture, as immediately operates upon mens mindes, as proper light doth on the Optick nerves, there can be nothing ſaid more inconſiderately. For mens underſtandings cannot diſcern the truth of things by immediate intuition, but onely in a diſcurſive manner; that is, by ſuch reaſons and arguments as perſwade to aſſent. And beſides, if that be true, not onely what you concluded from thence is ſo alſo, *viz. that 'tis enough, in order to our believing it, to acquaint our ſelvs with the contents thereof*; but likewiſe

Part I.

wise that 'tis altogether impossible, that any man should *read* the Scriptures, and not *believe* them, supposing he be *compos mentis*, and understands what he reads. But to convince us that this is not so, I fear there are very many sad instances, & have too good ground for my fears.

Well, *Philalethes*, it is time to have done with the First Advantage, that I told you is gotten, by having the Reasonableness of the precepts of the Gospel demonstrated to us, *viz. That it is no small confirmation of our faith in the truth thereof.*

XXIV. *A second Advantage gotten by demonstrating the reasonableness of the precepts of the Gospel.*

Secondly, Another Advantage we get hereby is, that by this means we learn the incomparable excellencie of our Saviours Religion; not to say above the Heathen Gods impositions on their worshippers, (their Religion being, for a great part, not onely most ridiculous, but also full of unnatural villainy and filthiness,

such

such as a modest tongue would find it difficult to utter, and chaste ears to hear: Witness the Rites of *Cybele*, the Feasts of *Bacchus*, *Flora*, *Venus* and *Priapus*; and likewise 'twas full of Cruelty and bloudy Tyranny) I say, passing by the Religion of the Heathens, as not worthy to be named on the same day with that of the Gospel; we do by this means understand the incomparable excellencie of our Saviours Religion, even above *that* given by God himself to his own people the *Israelites*, under the *Mosaical dispensation*. For, we know, it consisted of almost innumerable Injunctions, the reason of which is not at all obvious. We may see our way before us, in obeying Gospel-Precepts; *they* are enjoyned because *good*, whereas *these* were *good* onely because enjoyned. And though we may guess at reasons for Gods giving those people such a kinde of Religi-

Part I.

Part I. on in the general, yet we can ſay nothing for moſt of the particular inſtances of obedience, but that it was the divine will to make choice of them. They were in themſelvs of a perfectly-indifferent nature, and neither good nor evil; nor had they any thing, I ſay, that we know of, to commend them, and ſet them off, but the meer Legiſlators pleaſure. Now except we underſtand the vaſt difference betwixt the Law and the Goſpel; and how greatly the later, eſpecially in this point of *Reaſonableneſs*, excels the former; we ſhall be inſenſible of that much larger ſhare *we* have in the Goodneſs of God, than the *Jews* had, and ſo want a moſt exciting motive to chearful obedience to him, in the preſent notices of his will we are under the obligation of.

Philal. What you ſay, is too evident to be denied, or ſo much as diſputed: but I pray inform me more

more particularly, what you mean, when you say that the Precepts of the Gospel are highly reasonable. Part I.

XXV. *In what sence the precepts of the Gospel are highly reasonable.*

Theoph. You have less need, *Philalethes*, than most I know, to ask me that Question; but yet because I am gotten into a vein of talking, I will satisfie you, for discourse sake, in that demand. I mean, that they are such, as our Reason tells us are highly fitting, and becoming us; considering what kinde of creatures we are, and the Circumstances and Relations we stand in, to God, our selvs, and each other. Nay, they are *so* becoming us, that our Reason will also assure us, that the contrary are no less unworthy of us.

Philal. But before you proceed farther, give me leave so far to interrupt you, as to desire a clear description of Reason from you. Whatever *I* do, I can scarcely think that the great Decryers of it, do distinctly understand what it is.

Theoph. If they did, I cannot imagine what should incline them to such extravagant and strange prattle, as is heard from them. But to your Question: *Reason is that power, whereby men are enabled to draw clear Inferences from evident Principles.* And therefore when the Preachers we are discoursing of, and others, demonstrate the reasonableness of the Precepts of the Gospel; they prove that there are those self-evident Principles, from whence what the Gospel requires may be inferred to be our duty, although God had never declared his minde concerning them.

XXVI. *A description of Reason.*

Philal. But surely they cannot think, that there are no precepts in the Christian Religion, but what are such: what say you to those that enjoyn the two Sacraments?

Theoph. I will, in *short*, tell you all that, I think, is necessary to be said in this matter, in these two Propositions. First,

Part I.

XXVII. *The first Proposition, shewing in what sence the precepts of the Gospel are reasonable: with a brief demonstration that they are so.*

First, *All those things, wherein doth consist the substance of the Christian Religion, are good, and necessary in themselvs to be done; and the contrary evil, and necessary in themselvs to be avoided.* Those are such, as it would be a contradiction to suppose them not our duty; considering, as was said, what creatures we are, and our several Circumstances and Relations; and so would it be to suppose *these* not disbecoming us, and unworthy of us. Our Saviour, you know, sums up our whole duty in the love of God, and our Neighbour; the substance of which, (as is easie to be shewn by enumerating particulars) is reducible to these two Heads; nay to the *former*, namely the love of God. And there is no Principle we do more naturally assent to, than that he, *in whom we live, move, and have our being*; from whom we receive all we enjoy, and expect all that we can hope for

Part I.

of good; should be beloved by us, nay, and made also the object of our chief love. And an imitation of all Gods imitable perfections, is a necessary consequent of such a love of God; such as his Holiness, Justice, Goodness. *Hierocles* hath told us, that whom a man loves, he will as much as lyeth in him imitate; and that therefore it is necessary, that there should be not onely ὑσίας γνῶσις, *the knowledge of Gods nature and essence*; but also ἡ πρὸς αὐτὸν κατὰ δύναμιν ἐξομοίωσις, *All possible likeness thereunto*. Now the imitation of the Divine Nature, is the whole designe of the Christian Religion; (which St. *Gregory Nyssen* makes to be its very definition) as no one that considératively reads the Books wherein it is contained, can at all doubt.

"Ον γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ τις μιμεῖται, &c. p 22.

XXVIII. *The designe of the Christian Religion.*

XXIX. *The second Proposition.*

Secondly: *The other duties of the Gospel, which are but few, are imposed as* helps *to the performance of* those *forementioned.* They are not

not required for themſelvs, but for the ſake of the great Eſſentials of Religion. And it may be eaſily made good, that there are none of them of a meerly poſitive nature, except the two Sacraments: which yet are appointed for very great ends and purpoſes; and are moſt excellent helps to the attaining of true holineſs, and *that* wherein the power and life of Religion conſiſteth; and not onely tryals of obedience. Meditation, Prayer, Reading and Hearing Gods Word, the obſervation of the Lords day, good Conference, *&c.* are in *themſelvs* helps; and Baptiſm, and the Lords Supper are *ſo*, through the divine ordination. And *indeed*, to ſpeak properly, they are no leſs our *priviledge* than our duty; as being Seals of Gods Covenant, and Pledges to aſſure us of the divine grace; for which we are no leſs obliged to him, than we are for his gracious Promiſes. *Philal.*

Philal. But what think you of believing in Christ Jesus for the Remission of Sins? could *Reason* ever have prompted this, as mens duty?

Theoph. Yes, as soon as any thing enjoyned in the Gospel, when once it was demonstrated, that *him* hath God exalted to be our Prince and Saviour. Men would have, of themselvs, concluded Faith in him their duty, when they were convinced of that truth, though there had been no precept to make it so. Which is so *plain*, that I shall disparage your intellectuals in using more words to clear it to you.

Philal. It is indeed so plain, that I am ashamed I ask'd the Question.

Theoph. But if you please, *Philalethes*, I will more particularly, and distinctly, though very briefly, demonstrate that the duties of the Gospel are such, as *Reason* (would we consult it) would prompt to us.

Philal.

Philal. You cannot ſhew the ſtrength of your *own* Reaſon upon a nobler Subject. Part I.

Theoph. A very ſmall pittance of it, that is, ſo little as I am maſter of, is ſufficient to enable any one with eaſe to perform this ſucceſsfully. Now then, as our Saviour referreth our whole duty to two Heads, *viz.* the love of *God*, and our *Neighbour*: ſo doth the Apoſtle to three; *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Godlineſs*. Now for *Godlineſs*, which contains all our duty immediately relating to God; all the inſtances thereof, which the Goſpel enjoyns, may be learnt by improving but that one natural Principle of Gods exiſtence; and that thus. There being a God, he muſt neceſſarily be abſolutely perfect: He, being abſolutely perfect, is to be acknowledged the Creator, Preſerver, Benefactor, and Governour of the whole world: for it is unreaſonable to attribute our Creation,

XXX. *A more particular demonſtration of the Reaſonableneſs of the Goſpel-precepts.*

Part I.

tion, preservation, &c. to any besides such a Being. And then, God having all perfections in himself, and being *so* related to us; this will necessarily follow, that we ought to make him the object of our highest Admiration, our greatest love; we ought to offer up Sacrifices of Prayer and Praises to him, to trust in him, and depend upon him, in all our ways to acknowledge him; chearfully to do what he commands, patiently to submit to his dispose, &c. And there is no duty immediately relating to God, but is in those included; setting aside that of doing what he commands; for that alone takes in our whole duty in reference, not onely to God, but also to our Neighbour and our Selvs. God being such a one in himself, and to the world, as you heard; this *must* be eternally true, that it is the duty of all Reasonable creatures, to carry themselvs towards him as was

shewn.

ſhewn. There is ſo cloſe a connexion, between *thoſe* Premiſes, and *theſe* Concluſions; that a man cannot believe the one, and (except he were ſtark mad) doubt the other. We cannot more eaſily apprehend this Argument to be neceſſarily true, *viz. This Figure is a Circle, therefore all its parts are equally diſtant from the Center*; than this, *God is our Creator, Preſerver.* &c. *therefore we ought ſo as was now ſaid, to behave our ſelves towards him.* Nay, we can hardly think of *that premiſs*, but *this concluſion* will come into our mindes whether we will or no.

And then for *Righteouſneſs*, which implieth our duty to our Neighbour; that Rule of our Saviour, *What ye would that men ſhould do to you, that do ye to them*; (which *Severus* expreſſeth in Negative terms, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*) it is as ſelf-evident a

P

Part I. Principle, as any is to be found in Morals. And *this* will teach us to be just, most severely just to every body; and to be kinde and merciful to those that are in need: Now these two include all that the Gospel requires in reference to one another.

And then for *Sobriety*, that comprehendeth our whole duty to our selvs. The meer principle of Self-love will teach a man, that he may not be intemperate in any kinde; he by this means abusing himself. And the very knowledge of our selvs, and what excellent creatures we are, will convince us that we ought not to set our heart upon, or place our happiness in any earthly thing. Therefore, this was one Rule, among the several excellent ones in the *Pythagoræan* Golden Verses;

—— Πάντων δ' μάλιστα αἴδεῶ σεῦτον·
Above all things Revere thy self.

There is no man but does or may know, that his soul is too Noble a crea-

creature to glut it ſelf with baſe Corporeal Pleaſures ; and that his underſtanding is too ſublime a faculty to ſubject it ſelf to his brutiſh appetite : And that God, as the Philoſopher ſpeaks, indued him with *that*, to be ὁ ἄρχων, *A Prince and Ruler within him* ; and with *this*, to be τὸ ἀρχόμενον, *A Subject and Ruled* ; to be the Servant, not Maſter of his Minde. There is no man but *feels* his ſoul too big for theſe terreſtrial things, and that they are never able to fill its vaſt capacities. Now what are we enjoyned in the Chriſtian Religion, as relating to our ſelvs, but is to be reduced to one of theſe, nay to this one head of inordinate affection ? And in ſhort, (for I am ſenſible that we have protracted our diſcourſe upon this Subject to too great a length) I know no duties enjoyned in the Goſpel, beſides that of Faith in Chriſt, and the two Sacraments, but may be found, as to

the

Part I.

the ſubſtance of them, at leaſt *commended* as *noble perfections*, in ſome one or other of the Heatheniſh writings; as may be particularly ſhewn, but that it will take up too much time.

XXXI. *Almoſt all the duties enjoyned in the Goſpel commended by Heathens.*

Philal. What ſay you to meek bearing, and putting up affronts; but eſpecially, to *loving malicious enemies*, and *rendering good for evil?*

Theoph. Both theſe may be found in them; if not under the notion of indiſpenſable duties, yet as greatly becoming us, moſt highly commendable, and ſignifications of a *bravely* generous and virtuous Minde. The inſtances of the former, are *ſo* many, that you cannot be a ſtranger to them; nor any that have read but that little Book (that is worn out in School-boys hands) *Tully's Offices.* Nay, *Plato* brings in *Socrates* ſpeaking of it, as that to which all men are abſolutely obliged. *Injury*, ſaith he, *is to be done by no means, verily*

ly by no means, nor may it be repayed to him that doth an injury, as the vulgar think, for that it is to be committed upon no pretence. And what think you of that ſpeech of *Cato*: *If an Aſs kicks me, ſhall I again kick him?* He thereby intimated, that it was unworthy of him to be revengeful; at leaſt towards *ſome* ſort of people. And as to the later, I remember that *Origen* in his eighth Book againſt *Celſus* gives two notable inſtances of it: the one of *Lycurgus*, and the other of *Zeno*. One being delivered into the hands of *Lycurgus*, that had put out one of his eyes, he was ſo far from revenging the injury, as very great as it was, that he never left giving him wholſome Counſel, till he had made him in love with Philoſophy. And he brings in *Zeno* making this Reply to his enemy, that ſaid, *Let me periſh if I do thee not a miſchief*; viz. *And let me periſh if I do not reconcile thee*

Part I. *to me.* Both theſe ſhew ſufficiently what thoſe Heathens thought of returning good for evil.

Philal But have you obſerved, that the Heathens give Rules for the regulation of mens thoughts and affections, as well as words and actions?

Theoph. Why do you ask me that Queſtion? For you very well know that they abound with them, as ignorant as you are pleaſed to make your ſelf.

Philal. I was (I confeſs) guilty of great inconſiderateneſs in putting that Queſtion to you.

Theoph. And you are not to learn that divers of them lead men to good *ends* in their vertuous actions. And that, placing mans ſupreme happineſs in the enjoyment of God, they teach us to make that our great deſigne.

Philal. I have much obſerved it, and eſpecially in the Writings of the *Pla-*

Platonists. And moreover, that in their Moral discourses they tell us that it is our duty to perform good actions out of love to Goodness; and condemn base ends, and particularly some of them even that of applause, and a great Name, as much as some others allow of it, and commend it too. But have you found that any of them teach men to act our of Love to God, and to make his Glory their last end?

Theoph. These two you ought not to have distinguished from each other. Now though I do not remember the later in any of them, as you word it, yet the former I do. The forementioned *Hierocles* speaking of Piety or Love to God, hath this saying: *With this every thing is pleasing to God, but without this nothing.* And he brings in *Apollo* speaking thus, to one that offered an Hecatomb to him, but with no pious minde;

Μετ' αὐτῆς πάντα θεοφιλῆ, χωρὶς αὐτῆς οὐδὲν θεοφίλες, &c. p. 26.

Ἀλλά μοι εὐαδε χόνδρος ἀγακλυτῷ Ἑρμείαο.

Thine hundred Oxen I less kindly take
Than Poor but Pious Hermions *Barley-cake.*

But I need not trouble you with instances to this purpose; for there is nothing more *plainly* agreeable to Reason, than that we ought to act principally out of love to God; our obligations to him being beyond all expression and conception great. Any man may see this, that hath not lost all sense of Gratitude; which Principle how any should quite extirpate out of their souls, I cannot understand; it being, I think, not much less deeply rooted there, than that of self-love; and observable in *Brutes* as well as *men.*

Philal. But yet I conceive that to act out of love to *God*, and out of love to *Goodness*, are much the same.

Theoph. Materially they are; Goodness being the very nature of God. But 'tis certain that nothing argueth a man to be so like to God, as doth doing

doing vertuously from this principle of love to Goodness. Part I.

Philal. Nor do the holy Scriptures seem to me, to make any nice distinction between designing the enjoyment of God as our supreme happiness, and making his glory our last End.

Theoph. No, surely, they do not; and I wish that no good people were more Critical in so doing, than the Scriptures are; by this means would many free themselves from a great deal of needless trouble they are apt to cast themselvs down with.

Philal. I have sometimes wondered greatly, how Heathens should come by such excellent notions, in matters of Religion; but I should now be tempted to account it matter of Admiration, should they all have been ignorant of them.

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, I do really think, that it is so far from being difficult to conceive, how

Part I.

thoſe that never law theBible ſhould have ſuch conceptions; that it would be rather ſo, how thoſe of them that, through the goodneſs of God, were emerged out of thoſe groſs notions of the Deity, into which the generality of Mankinde were ſunk, and that made uſe of their intellectuals, and were conſiderative, ſhould not have them.

XXXII. *Thoſe vindicated from making the Goſpel but little better than a mere natural Religion, that aſſert that Reaſon alone is able to prompt to us moſt of the duties therein enjoyned.*

Philal. But doth not what hath been ſaid tend to diſparage the Goſpel, and make it the very ſame, excepting in two or three precepts, with a meer Natural Religion?

Theoph. I would rather impoſe an eternal ſilence upon my tongue, and pluck it out by the roots too, than once utter a ſyllable to ſuch a miſchievous purpoſe But I am ſo far from being conſcious to my ſelf that what hath been ſaid doth tend to the *debaſing* of the Chriſtian Religion, that, I know, it highly conduceth to its *commendation*.

But

But whereas you asked, whether to assert that there are scarcely any duties therein enjoyned, but what mens *Reason* alone, were it well consulted, might suggest so to be, be not to make it a meer Natural Religion: To that I answer, that you did not consider, that the Gospel is not made up altogether of *agenda*, or *things to be done*; whereas *these*, you know, are but a part of it: There are, besides, relations of matters of fact, and many things to be *known*, and points of *meer* belief, which yet have an influence upon practice too: There are abundance of Promises as well as Precepts; and stupendious expressions of Gods love to Mankinde therein declared; all which we are beholden to *Revelation* alone for the knowledge of. But, in short, I assert these two things concerning the Gospel, which do highly tend to the magnifying of it infinitely above any Religion that was ever

Part I.

Part I.

embraced by the ſons of men.

XXXIII. *Wherein the Goſpel excelleth all other Religions.*

First, That it containeth all thoſe excellent Precepts, that are ſcattered here and there very thinly among much Traſh and Rubbiſh in other Books, ſome in one, and ſome in another; and moreover, that there is found therein whatſoever may be diſcovered by Reaſon to be becoming and worthy of Mankinde; which are all there expreſſed, one where or other, in a moſt plain and intelligible manner. And were there no more in the Goſpel than *this*, we ſhould be infinitely obliged to God for it: in that, what the Heathens took pains for, and by the exerciſe of their diſcurſive faculty were, or might have been acquainted with; we have laid before our eyes, and the knowledge thereof need coſt us no more pains, than Reading the Scriptures will put us to. Leſt we ſhould either be too *ſlothful* to acquire the knowledge of our whole duty,

duty, by drawing inferences from premiſes, and gathering one thing from another; or any of us too *weak headed* to do this ſucceſsfully; God hath out of his abundant kindneſs, aſſured us thereof from his own mouth; which we have all great cauſe to eſteem, as a moſt exceedingly great Priviledge. But this is but little in compariſon of what is next to be ſaid. Part I.

Secondly, The Goſpel gives far greater helps to the performance of our duty; and enforceth its precepts with infinitely ſtronger, and more perſwaſive Motives and Arguments, than were ever before made known. Such as the unconceivable love of God in giving his onely begotten Son to take the humane nature, and to be an Expiatory Sacrifice for Loſt Sinners; his excellent Example here among us; his declarations of Free pardon to the vileſt of Sinners upon their Repentance, and Faith in his Go-

Part I. Gospel. His proffers of grace to assist us in well-doing, and his readiness to work in us by his Spirit an inward living principle of holiness, if we will not resist and quench it; his promises of the most transcendently-glorious reward in the life to come, to sincere Believers, and threatnings of the most dismal punishment to those that shall persist in impenitence and unbelief, *&c.*

Philal. You need say no more, than you have done, to make the *Christian* a most incomparable *Religion*: but did you not say too much under the former Head, in affirming that therein is contained our whole duty, so as that we need do no more than read the Gospel, to come to the knowledge of it? For there are very many Moral cases, wherein men are forced to use their Reason to the utmost, and also to call in the assistance of other mens, for the understanding of their duty in them. *Theoph.*

Theoph. Surely, *Philalethes*, you could not think me so extremely weak, as to mean by what I said, that the Scriptures descend minutely to determine all possible cases in particular; for this cannot be done in Books; they being infinite, and varying with mens *innumerable* circumstances. But this was my meaning, that the particular duties men are *constantly* obliged to, are all *plainly* there reveled, and in the most express terms: And I adde, that there are also general Rules laid down, whereby all emergent cases may be determined, and such as *ordinarily* occur, at least, for the *most* part, with the greatest ease.

XXXIV. *To say that what the Gospel requireth is most sutable to Reason, is highly to commend it, &c.*

But to go on: To say that there is nothing required but what is most sutable to our Rational faculties, tends as much to magnifie Gods goodness to us, and to commend the Gospel, as any thing that can be said: And should it consist much, of perfectly

Part I.

fectly new Precepts, which the world could never before ſo much as once have dreamt of, or of any thing like to them; and the reaſonableneſs of which could not be at all, or not without great difficulty apprehended, it would be exceedingly leſs eaſie to believe it to be a Religion ſent from God, than now it is. This alſo makes it a Religion as eaſie to be practiſed by Mankinde as can be: for all the Duties, wherein conſiſteth the ſubſtance of it, muſt have continued to oblige us, whether they were therein expreſſed or no. From what hath been ſaid, it is moſt manifeſt, that while we continue to be men, they cannot ceaſe to be our duty: and therefore whatſoever other precepts the Goſpel might have conſiſted of, they would have been an addition to our Burthen. And we may be hereby convinced that Gods deſigne in giving us the Goſpel is purely our own good, ſeeing the

the impoſitions, wherein (as I ſaid) conſiſts the ſubſtance of it, are but juſt ſo many as obedience to which is abſolutely neceſſary in *themſelvs* conſidered, much more then to the qualifying of us for the full enjoyment of himſelf in bleſſedneſs; and the reſt are enjoyned onely as helps to enable us to obey them.

XXXV. *Of their preaching the Reaſonableneſs of the points of meer belief.*

Philal. But do thoſe Preachers content themſelvs to ſhew that the *duties* of the Goſpel are very reaſonable? I have been informed, that they riſe higher in this attempt, and that ſometimes they undertake to demonſtrate that the points of meer *belief*, and even the moſt *myſterious* too, are ſo; and endeavour to level them with mens ſhallow Capacities.

Theoph. This, *Philalethes*, is partly true, and partly as falſe: It is in a ſenſe true, that they have proved ſometimes that all the points of meer belief are reaſonable; that is,

con-

Part I.

XXXVI. *All the points of mere belief to be consistent with Reason, sometimes proved by them.*

consistent with Reason, so that we can have no temptation to dis-believe any, upon the account of their contrariety to the innate and natural notions of our mindes. They (some of them at least) endeavour to convince their Auditors, that our Saviour hath not imposed upon our Faculties, in requiring our assent to Contradictions; that he puts not his *disciples*, as his pretended Vicegerent doth his *proselytes*, upon offering violence to their understandings, in any thing as a matter of Faith proposed by him.

Philal. This is no more, in my opinion, than is necessary for men to know: For though our best Reason could never have proved to us divers Gospel-truths, had they not been reveled; yet they being reveled, there is nothing, surely, in them, that rightly understood, sounds so harshly, but that our Reason may admit of it, and close with it. But

do

do they not (as I said I have heard) go about to bring down all such points to mens capacities?

XXXVII *That they do not endeavour to level all such points with mens capacities.*

Theoph. That, be you assured, is a notorious Calumny; for they onely say, that the Doctrines of the Gospel are all such as we may be able to make *sence* of; and that there is nothing in them that is *opposite* to our Reason. But they most freely acknowledge, that there are such Mysteries, as are so sublime as much to *exceed* our apprehensions; and that can by no means be comprehended by the most rational persons. And this acknowledgement, they have well proved, is no disparagement to our Saviours Religion; but rather procures to it the greater veneration: there being no wise man but will willingly confess, that there are even in *Nature* innumerable things which he knows to be, but yet is not able to imagine how they are; and that his very *Senses* do assure

XXXVIII *That they acknowledge incomprehensible Mysteries in the Christian Religion.*

Part I. aſſure him of many ſuch things as no faculty of his can give him a ſatisfactory account of.

Philal. I have often thought it to be very fit, that there ſhould be ſome ſuch Points in our Religion, as are not comprehenſible and adæquate objects of our Underſtandings; that ſo, as we are to take occaſion from the conſideration of thoſe Doctrines that God hath made facile, and adapted to our underſtandings, to admire his gracious condeſcention; ſo from the conſideration of thoſe, which we finde ſurpaſs our reach, we may no leſs adore his wiſdom. But, *Theophilus*, do thoſe Divines ever undertake to demonſtrate the conſiſtency of ſome Myſterious points with our Reaſon, as they are by the *Schoolmen*, and other over-*ſubtile Gentlemen* made out?

Theoph. No, I hope you think them wiſer men than to adventure up-

upon a Task so desperate. They consider those Points as they are delivered in the Scriptures; and not as dressed up with the Metaphysical Subtilties of Wanton Wits: who have been so far from doing service to those Doctrines, that they have rendered them much more doubtful to many inquisitive persons, and such as are not easily imposed upon, by confident Sayings, and great Names.

Part I.

XXXIX. *That they prove the consistency of such points with reason, as they are delivered in Scripture onely.*

Philal. But now it comes to my minde, I am confident I have been told by some of their good Friends, that they assert more concerning the reasonableness of the Speculative Doctrines of Christianity, than that they are onely not *inconsistent* with Reason; but moreover, that they are very *suitable* to its dictates.

XL. *That they assert many speculative points to be also suitable to the dictates of Reason.*

Theoph. I thank you for helping my Memory in *this*, as well as in many other particulars: your infor-

Part I.

mation is very true as to many of the weightiest Points; and there is no wise man but will assert the same. For it is well known that the *Heathens* had a notion of them: *Life and immortality* are said to be *brought to light by the Gospel*, i. e. to give Mankinde full satisfaction in that Article of Faith, is the sole prerogative of the Gospel; our Saviour having given a sensible demonstration of it, by his own Resurrection and Ascension; as well as in the plainest terms preached it. Now you need not be told that several of the Learned Heathens have by Arguments drawn from the nature of humane souls made that Doctrine highly probable; and that even the more Brutish sort of them had *generally*, if not *universally* a sense of a life to come. You know also that the Doctrine of a day of Judgment they were no strangers to. *Justin Martyr truly* tells the Greeks in his Ora-

XLI. *An Argument drawn from notions of the Heathens to prove the most weighty Points of Faith suitable to the dictates of Reason.*

Oration to them, That *not onely the Prophets, and other Divine persons of the Old Teſtament; but alſo thoſe that were accounted* wiſe *among the Heathens, both the Poets and Philoſophers, did acknowledge a judgement to come after death.* And their Poets tell us of three perſons whoſe Office it is to judge men in the other world; *viz. Minos, Rhadamanthus*, and *Æacus*. And mens being adjudged to rewards and puniſhments in the *other*, ſuitable to their actions in *this* world, was a Doctrine that accompanied that other, and as generally received: Nor are you ignorant what excellent Diſcourſes divers of the Philoſophers have of the nature of true happineſs. The forementioned *Juſtin* ſaith, That *it ſeemed probable to him, that* Plato *had entertained the doctrine of the Reſurrection of the body*: but I muſt leave him there, becauſe I finde that he gives

Part I.

an insufficient reason for that Conjecture.

Nay, even the Doctrine of the *Trinity* was, as to the substance of it, embraced by the *Pythagoræans* and *Platonists*.

Several other instances of this nature may be produced.

And there are other Particulars I might present you with, of notions the Heathens had, resembling several other Doctrines reveled in the Gospel, which are not less generally known than the forementioned. As they held a Doctrine somewhat like that of the divine Conception of our Saviour: for it was their opinion that divers of their eminent Benefactors were born of more than Humane race, and that they were *ex stirpe Deorum*; and accordingly gave Divine honour to them. Their sacrificing of men for the attoning of their Gods, shewed that they believed what is somewhat of kin to the

Do-

Doctrine of Satisfaction; or Christs reconciling us to God, by offering himself up as a Propitiatory Sacrifice. As *Grotius*, among others, hath fully shewn in his Book of *Satisfaction*. Part I.

They had another opinion that beareth resemblance to our Saviours Mediatorship; for they held the intercession of *Dæmons*; of which Mr *Mede* hath discoursed in his *Apostacie of the later times*; and I finde that *Celsus* calls our Saviour the Christians *Dæmon*.

Philal. By these instances it should seem that the Heathens did of their own accords give credit to as strange Doctrines as any our Saviour requires our belief of; and that several of the *strangest* of them are so far from sounding like uncouth and absurd ones, that they are rather gratifications of the natural propensions of Mankinde.

Theoph. That the Learned Dr.

Part I. *More* hath well obſerved in his *Myſtery of Godlineſs*. Though, no queſtion, the Fathers did upon good grounds conclude that the Heathens received many Notions from the Jews, and ſome from a more ancient Tradition; and therefore we have no cauſe to judge that all the forementioned were the products of their own reaſoning, yet that makes not at all againſt the aſſertion that occaſioned theſe inſtances, but on the contrary clearly proves it. For I did not ſay that many of the weightieſt Points of meer belief may be certainly concluded from principles of Reaſon; or that, without the help of Revelation, men might have been acquainted with them; but that they are ſuitable to the Reaſon of mens Mindes, being reveled; and ſeveral of them very *taking* too; which appeareth by the Heathens being ſo tenacious of ſome, and ſo readily catching at

others

others upon the first news of them.

Philal. I give you my heartiest thanks, *Theophilus*, for the full satisfaction you have given me concerning those Friends of ours endeavours to perswade men of the Reasonableness of Christianity. Which doth much adde to my esteem of them; (though I know many are offended with them upon this account, and by way of *contempt* call them *The Rational Preachers*) for this Subject is most *necessary* to be handled in this our Age especially, wherein Atheism and Irreligion are, to the grief of all good men, gotten into the *Principles*, as well as *Practices* of very many. And I hope that I shall be better able for the future to vindicate them, than I have been, when I hear them reproached for bringing so much *Reason* into points of *Faith*. I must desire you now to proceed to inform me of other things that are, in their Preaching,

Part I.

most worthy of obſervation.

XLII. *Of their Style in Preaching.*

Theoph. I think it not amiſs, *Philalethes*, to let you underſtand in the next place, that they affect not Bombaſte words, trifling Strains of Wit, fooliſh Quibling, and making pretty ſport with Letters and Syllables in their Preaching; but deſpiſe thoſe doings as pedantick and unmanly. But on the contrary, they uſe a Style that is very *grave*, and no leſs *ſignificant*.

Philal. This, undoubtedly, muſt needs be beſt *pleaſing* to the more underſtanding part of our Congregations, and to *all* incomparably moſt *profitable*: As much as that pretty toying is cryed up by many, as a moſt rare Accompliſhment; and conciliates to the moſt dextrous in that Knack, the repute of the Ableſt Preachers; and makes them greatly plauſible.

Theoph. But, certainly, it can do ſo among none, but very little-ſoul'd and

and childiſh people; and *ſuch* as whoſe judgement in Sermons, no *wiſe* man will make any account of. Part I.

XLIII. *Of their making Doctrines intelligible.*

I will adde alſo, that it is their endeavour to make the Doctrines of the Goſpel as eaſie and intelligible as well they may; wherein none have been more ſucceſsful. They are far from thoſe mens untoward *genius*, that delight to exerciſe their Wits, in finding out Myſtical and Cabaliſtical ſences in the plaineſt parts of Scripture, and in turning every thing almoſt into Allegories.

XLIV. *A ſort of men that are obſcurers of the Goſpel.*

Philal. I am greatly apt to fear, that thoſe men are far from being hearty friends of our Saviour, and his Religion; and that ſome, not daring openly to decry the Goſpel, take this courſe to undermine it, and to make a meer Trifle of it.

Theoph. They give us great cauſe for ſuch a ſuſpicion.

Obſerve moreover, that thoſe Prea-

Part I.

XLV. *Another sort of such.*

Preachers are no less averse to their temper, who, most admiring that which they least understand, and thinking there is very little in that, which is quickly intelligible; please themselvs exceedingly with making Mysteries of the easiest points of Faith; and such Mysteries too, as they tell us, no man, though he be master of never so clear a Reason, can have an insight into, without the special illumination of the Holy Ghost. That, because the Apostle saith, *Great is the mystery of godliness*, would make every thing *so* that the Gospel hath reveled; and that so *high* as was now said: whereas in those words S. *Paul* means no more, than that divers Doctrines of the Gospel, such as he *there* enumerates, *viz. God manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit*, &c. are so high and admirable, that we cannot dive to the bottom of them, or fully comprehend them, nor could have so

ſo much as once *thought* of them, had they not been from Heaven made known: but that being reveled they are ſtill to Reaſon unintelligible, and cannot be *ſufficiently underſtood* thereby; he hath aſſerted no ſuch thing. Now of *theſe*, as well as of the *former*, thoſe Preachers have, no leſs than any, diſcovered the great weakneſs and vanity; and when they have occaſion, make it plainly appear, that thoſe whoſe notions of divers Articles of Faith are ſo expreſſed, as that no man, that makes good uſe of his Reaſon, can tell what to make of them, deſerve nothing leſs than the Titles of *Spiritual Preachers*, and *profound Divines*, as they are by many accounted; and that they, inſtead of being ſo, bewray very great ignorance of the Goſpel.

Philal. And, without queſtion, they do no ſmall miſchief, but render our Religion, which you have

ſhewn

Part I.

shewn is so highly reasonable, greatly suspected by many of the warier sort of people.

Theoph. I remember that *Erasmus* complaineth of the times of the *Nicene Council*, that *it was then a matter of great Wit and Cunning to be a Christian.* And a matter it was most worthy to be complained of: for evident it is, that our Saviour never made it so. He hath made Christianity, so much, at least, as is necessary to carry men to heaven, so plain, that an *honest* heart is a sufficient prerequisite to the understanding of it.

XLVI. *Of the perspicuity of Scripture.*

Philal. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that he hath delivered all those points that are absolutely necessary to be rightly understood, in the plainest and most intelligible manner: and so condescended to the weakest capacities, that they cannot but apprehend his meaning in them, if it be not their own fault.

Theoph.

Theoph. I count that onely thoſe Doctrines, that contain the terms of Mans Salvation, are of abſolute neceſſity to be by all rightly underſtood; and that all ſuch are delivered with that perſpicuity and clearneſs, that nothing but mens ſhutting their eyes againſt the light can keep them from diſcerning their true meaning.

Philal. S. *Auſtin* hath a good ſaying to this purpoſe, in his Book *of Chriſtian Doctrine*, viz. *That all thoſe things that contain faith and manners of life, are found among thoſe Doctrines that are* plainly *laid down in Scripture.*

Theoph. This is ſo true, that *Celſus* is brought in by *Origen*, in his Sixth Book, finding great fault with the Scriptures upon the account of their plainneſs, and great ſimplicity: To whom he returneth this anſwer; *That Jeſus and his Apoſtles made uſe of ſuch a Style, as was beſt ſuited*

Part I.

to the vulgar sort; and that Plato *and other of* their *Philosophers were greatly to blame, for expressing themselvs in so lofty a manner as they did; for that, by this means, none could make use of them but* Learned *men.* And I remember that, in his seventh Book, he tells *Celsus*, that Plato *and the other wise Grecks were like to Physicians that took care of persons of the better rank, but neglected ordinary Plebeians, and the meaner sort; whereas the Prophets, and Disciples of Jesus, did no less carefully apply themselvs to the good of* simple, *than of* wise *people.*

Philal. Surely Christ will never condemn men at the last day, for not believing those things they could not by any means understand to be reveled: and it is matter of admiration to me, that any should judge the Gospel to be obscure in matters necessary; when the Apostle

accounted it ſo ſad a Judgement not to underſtand it: for, ſaith he, *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt.* Part I.

Theoph. And in the words following he ſaith, that *thoſe that underſtand it not, have their eyes blinded by the God of this world. Iſaiah*, propheſying of the Goſpel, and expreſſing it by the Metaphor of a way, ſaith that it is ſo *plain*, that *wayfaring men*, *though* fools, *ſhall not erre therein.* 'Tis true indeed, it is ſo deep a Sea, as S. *Hierome* ſaith, that *the* Elephant *may ſwim there*: there is that, and *much* of that too, that puttеth the ſtrongeſt Brains, and moſt ſearching Wits, hard to it: but (as the ſame Father addes) 'tis ſo ſhallow a brook alſo, that is, as to all things *neceſſary* to ſalvation, that *the* Lamb *may wade in it.* So that all thoſe, *Philalethes*, that affect to make *ſuch* Truths as ſubtil and myſterious as they can,

do

Part I. do what lyeth in them to cross and make ineffectual the design that our Saviour and his Apostles had in the delivery of them; and *these*, and all other Preachers that, like them, do condemn such doings, do no less advance it. And I will adde, that those that affect to make any points as obscure as they can, whether they are necessary or not, are too injurious to the Christian Religion.

XLVII. *Their opinion of powerful Preaching.*

And, by what hath been said, I am likewise put in minde to tell you, that these persons look upon no Preaching as truly *powerful*, but that which worketh upon the *affections* by first conquering the *judgement*; and convinceth men of their duty by solid Reasons and Arguments, and excites them thereunto by perswasive Motives: they esteeming that which affects people so, as they can give no account why it should, to be so far from *powerful*, that it doth not deserve to be called

Preach-

Preaching. Now upon *these* accounts, as well as *those* forementioned, do many inconsiderate people despise them, as men of dry Reason, and void of Gods Spirit: as if to be a *spiritual* Preacher, were to be an irrational one; and none were capable of divine illuminations, but such as have bid adieu to the guidance of their intellectuals. Which is as much as to say, that we must cease to be *Men*, and be metamorphos'd into Brutes, before we can hope to become Christians.

XLVIII. *Of carnal and spiritual Reason.*

Philal. What confused and gross thoughts have such people in the matters of Religion! as not to be able to distinguish between that which is *truly carnal* (which they talk so much against) and *spiritual* Reason; and not to understand that the *former* is that onely which is governed by fleshly and corrupt affections, and the *later* that which is submitted *to*, and directed *by* our

Part I. Saviours Gospel, and designeth nothing so much as promoting the ends of it.

XLIX. *A farther account of their Preaching.*

Theoph. There are a few things more, *Philalethes*, I would advertise you of, concerning the Preaching of these our Friends; namely, that they are very careful so to handle the Doctrine of Justifying Faith, as not onely to make obedience to *follow* it, but likewise to include a hearty willingness to submit to all Christs precepts in the *nature* of it. And to shew the falsity and defectiveness of some descriptions of Faith, that have had too general an entertainment, and still have. This they look upon themselvs as greatly obliged to do, as being well aware, of what dangerous consequence some received notions of that grace are; and that not a few that have imbibed them, have so well understood their true and natural inferences, as to be thereby encouraged to

let

let the Reins looſe to all Ungodli- Part I.
neſs.

They alſo ſo ſtate the Doctrine of *imputed*, as to ſhew the abſolute neceſſity of *inhærent* Righteouſneſs, and that in a more intelligible way, and leſs lyable to miſconſtruction, than hath ordinarily been heretofore done. As alſo the Doctrine of Gods grace, ſo as to reconcile it *with*, and ſhew the indiſpenſableneſs *of* mens endeavours: and (as the Apoſtle doth) they make Gods readineſs to work in us to *will*, by his *preventing* grace, and to *do*, by his *aſſiſting*, a *motive* to work out our own ſalvation. And I have heard ſeveral of them do this, in a more ſatisfactory and clear manner, than moſt, with whoſe Preaching I have been acquainted: wherein, as in the foregoing inſtances, they have done, in my opinion, very worthy ſervice. But ſome hot-headed men, from *thence* alſo, take occaſion great-

Part I. ly to vilifie them, & repreſent them as men Popiſhly affected, and holding Juſtification by *works* : as perſons utterly unacquainted with the great Myſtery of *believing* : as thoſe that make void the righteouſneſs of *Faith*, by eſtabliſhing *Moral* righteouſneſs : and that ſet themſelvs to cry up the power of *Nature*, and to perſwade their Hearers, that they are able to convert themſelvs, without being beholden to the *divine grace*. In all which, it is eaſie to ſhew that they have performed the parts of moſt notorious Calumniators ; and ſhewed themſelves, if not too malicious (which I would not think) yet extremely weak.

Philal. You ſay that they are accuſed as men that make void the righteouſneſs of Faith, by eſtabliſhing *Moral* righteouſneſs: I am thereby put in minde, that they have another Name given them beſides the Long one, and that of *Rational*

Prea-

Preachers; namely, *Moral Preachers*. Part I.

Theoph. Then have *you* heard them so called?

Philal. Yes, of late frequently.

Theoph. And do you think that an opprobrious name, *Philalethes*?

Philal. No, I assure you, not I; but I perceive *they* do that use it.

Theoph. I ever esteemed *Morality* as that which no true Christian can have a slight opinion of; and therefore thought it could never be judged a *Crime* to preach it.

L. *Of their being accused of preaching up onely a Moral righteousness.*

Philal. But by *Moral Preachers* they mean such as are meerly so.

Theoph. If by *Moral righteousness* they understand a barely *external* conformity *to*, or *customary* observance *of* the laws of Righteousness, they most shamefully belye these Divines, in saying that they preach no other Righteousness: but if they mean thereby, the whole

LI. *In what sence they do not so,*

Part I.

and in what ſence they do.

duty of man, to God, his Neighbour, and Himſelf; which *theſe* Preachers inſiſt upon, as much as *any* whatſoever, by the names of *true holineſs*, the *divine life of vertue*, the *righteouſneſs which is of God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus*; which he taught in his own perſon, and by his Apoſtles, and, upon our uſing the means, works in us by his Spirit; or *inward rectitude and integrity*; and *doing all the good we can from the beſt and moſt divine principles*; or, (as one of them expreſſeth it) *that divine and heavenly life whoſe* root *is faith in God and our Saviour Chriſt*; *and the branches or parts of it are humility, purity, and charity*: I ſay, if they upon the account of their preaching up ſuch a Righteouſneſs alone as *this*, call them in *contempt Moral* Preachers, they expoſe onely *themſelvs* to *contempt* by ſo doing.

Philal. Thoſe men will tell you, that

that *Evangelical* righteouſneſs is as well to be inſiſted on as *Moral*, nay and more than *Moral* too, by perſons that would be accounted Goſpel-Preachers. Part I.

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, I am ſo very dull, as not to be able to make any diſtinction between theſe two, as I have now deſcribed the later righteouſneſs; but think *Evangelical* to be ſuch a *Moral* righteouſneſs, and ſuch a *Moral Evangelical*. LII. *No difference betwixt Evangelical righteouſneſs and that which is in the beſt ſence Moral.*

Philal. But you know, that *they* make a difference between them.

Theoph. It is ſtrange they ſhould; underſtanding Moral righteouſneſs for that which conſiſteth in the Regulation of both the *outward* and *inward* man, according to the unchangeable Laws of righteouſneſs; (which I muſt confeſs may be properly called *Moral righteouſneſs*, and is ſo in the *moſt* proper ſence too) for I am as certain, as that the

Part I.

LIII. *To work in us ſuch a Moral righteouſneſs the deſigne of the Goſpel.*

Goſpel is true, that its onely *ultimate* deſigne upon us, is to work in us that Righteouſneſs. Let any man but conſider the *Precepts* of it, and he ſhall finde, I'll warrant him, that they are all deſigned (either mediately or immediately) to make men in that ſence *morally righteous*. And I fear not to ſay, that I am verily perſwaded, that if this were not the end of the Chriſtian Religion, it would not be worthy of the Son of God. Let any one read our Saviours Sermon upon the Mount, and then tell me whether he doth not think, that if He were now upon the earth, theſe men would not call him a *Moral preacher*. He muſt have a ſtrangely piercing eye of his own, that can therein diſcern any other, than *ſuch* Moral diſcourſes. What doth the Apoſtle S. *Paul* tell us, *the grace of God that brings ſalvation teacheth us*? is it not, *that denying ungodlineſs, and all worldly luſts,*

luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godlily ? And if theſe Gentlemen ſuppoſe, that *living godlily* implieth ſomething that is not *ſo* Moral, (for I know they will not ſay ſo concerning *living ſoberly and righteouſly*) they will finde themſelvs very hard put to it to make it out. For all Godlineſs, our Saviour (as hath been ſaid) referreth to the *love* of God ; and it would be ſtrange if *that* ſhould not be a Moral vertue. What did S. *Peter* mean, when (ſpeaking of our Saviour) he ſaith, that *his own ſelf bare our ſins in his own body, on the tree ; that we, being dead to* ſin, *might live to* righteouſneſs ? What *righteouſneſs* ſhould that be , which he doth there oppoſe to *ſin*, if not ſuch a one as is in the number of Morals ? And yet the Apoſtle tells us , that our living to *this* was the deſigne of the death of Chriſt. *This* alſo is the end of the *promiſes* , as well as *precepts*

Part I.

cepts of the Goſpel; as the ſame S. Peter aſſureth us. *He hath given us*, ſaith he, *exceeding great and precious promiſes*; for what end? is it that we ſhould be ſwollen with high conceits of Gods ſpecial love to us, and of our being the favourites and darlings of heaven? Nothing leſs: but it followeth, *that by theſe we might be partakers of the Divine nature, having eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt.* And what do thoſe men think it is to *eſcape the corruption of the world*, if not, to be truly *virtuous*, and, in the *beſt* ſence, *morally righteous*? Nay, what can they imagine it is to *partake of the divine*, or *a* divine *nature*, if not this? Can any thing be underſtood thereby, but participating of the divine *moral* perfections, ſuch as Juſtice, Mercy, Purity? I hope they will not ſay that an imitation of God in power, knowledge, and his other *Phyſical*

per-

perfections is there intended. *This* St. *Paul* alſo (as much as thoſe people count him their *great* friend, and quote him more than any other Apoſtle) makes to be the deſigne of the Promiſes. *Having theſe promiſes* (ſaith he) *dearly beloved, let us cleanſe our ſelvs from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, (all ſenſuality, malice and pride) *perfecting holineſs in the fear of the Lord.* Nay, I may adde, that there is not a *Doctrine*, (as meerly Speculative as divers may ſeem to be at firſt ſight) but it hath a tendencie to the promoting of *this Moral* righteouſneſs: but that will be too long a task to perform now. And, indeed, I may ſpare my pains to do *this* at any other time; for it will not be long, before the world will ſee a Diſcourſe upon this Subject from a very worthy perſon, if God ſpare him life and health. But enough of this: I am aſhamed to adde more in ſo plain

Part I. plain a caſe; and think, indeed, that I have ſaid too much.

LIV. *A righteouſneſs in no ſence Moral a contradiction.*

Philal. What you have ſaid is as clear as the Sun at noon-day: and for my part I muſt confeſs, that I know no Righteouſneſs, that deſerves that name, but what is, in your ſence, truly *moral.* And a righteouſneſs in no ſence *ſo*, ſeems to my underſtanding a moſt perfect Contradiction. And therefore I much wonder what ſhould incline thoſe people to inveigh againſt preaching up altogether ſuch a righteouſneſs as this is. They muſt therefore mean, ſurely, ſomething elſe by it, than ſuch a one as you have deſcribed. Do they not (think you) mean, however they expreſs themſelvs, a *perfect unſinning* righteouſneſs; or the other extreme, a meer *partial* and *external* one?

Theoph. I had a thouſand times rather charge them with an errour of *Underſtanding* onely, than of *Will*;

Will; and therefore I ſhould be loath to think that they mean either of *thoſe*, becauſe I cannot then excuſe them from the guilt of notorious *lying*; for they have not the leaſt ſhadow of pretence for accuſing thoſe Preachers of at all preaching up the *former* righteouſneſs; which *they* as little doubt as *any*, that no man in this lapſed ſtate can attain to; and as to the *later*, none more frequently ſhew the defectiveneſs and inſufficiencie of it. But I perceive that *I* am acquainted with thoſe mens Principles better than *you* are; and therefore can, I preſume, tell you, why they are ſo angry with thoſe that underſtand the Goſpel better than themſelvs, for preaching up onely this *truly moral* or *real* righteouſneſs: namely, becauſe they hear no talks from their Pulpits of an *Imputative* righteouſneſs. Part I.

Philal. You ſtartle me now, *Theophilus*;

Part I.

philus ; I pray do thoſe Preachers deny Imputed righteouſneſs ? I thought them as Orthodox in that, as in any other point.

LV. *Of imputative righteouſneſs ; and in what ſence they believe and preach it.*

Theoph. They don't uſe the *phraſe*, at leaſt not often ; and anon I will tell you why ; but they *believe* the *thing*, and *preach* it too, in that ſence, that I dare ſay *you* do.

Philal. In what ſence ?

Theoph. Do you not remember, that I told you a while ſince, that *they* ſo *handle the doctrine of* imputed, *as to ſhew the neceſſity of* inhærent *righteouſneſs* ?

Philal. Yes very well.

LVI. *Their notion of Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs.*

Theoph. This, then, is their notion of Chriſts Imputed righteouſneſs : That thoſe which are *ſincerely* righteous, and from an *inward living* principle allow themſelvs in no *known ſin*, nor in the neglect of any *known duty*, which is to be truly *Evangelically* righteous, ſhall be dealt with and rewarded, in and through

through Christ, as if they were perfectly, and in a strict *Legal* sence so. Part I.

Philal. I my self would have given no other account of Imputed righteousnes.

Theoph. You see, I had a good guess of you: for I presumed that such a man, as I take *you* to be, could entertain no other notion of it; for I am confident that this is the onely true one.

Philal. But are there any that will not be satisfied with this account? I must confess, it is so long since that I read any thing of the Quarrelsom mens Divinity, that I have forgotten both in *this*, and some *other* particulars, what they say.

Theoph. But have you not had occasion of late to discourse with any of them?

Philal. No, not about matters of Religion.

Theoph. If you had, I believe you

Part I. you would not have asked me, whether there are any, that have any other notion of imputed righteousness, than that which you now heard.

Philal. Inform me, I pray, what is their opinion of it.

Theoph. That *I* will do *truly*; and it is this: That Christs righteousness or inherent holiness is as completely made *theirs*, as if they themselves were *completely* and *perfectly* righteous: and that upon no other condition or qualification wrought in them, but onely *believing*; whereby too many of them mean strongly *fancying* this righteousness to be *theirs*.

LVII. *A false notion of it.*

Philal. *I* do now remember that *I* have read such doctrine as this in my younger days: but *I* need no argument to convince me that it is grosly false. For there are these two *palpable* mistakes in it.

First,

First, That *Christs* righteouſneſs is properly made *ours*. I am confident, that there is no *Scripture* that tells us ſo. All that we finde aſſerted in the Goſpel, as to this matter, is this; That *real* beneſits and advantages, which are likewiſe exceedingly *great* & *excellent*, do by the righteouſneſs of Christ accrue to us; and thoſe no *leſs* great and excellent, than if that righteouſneſs were in the moſt *proper* ſence ours. Part I. LVIII. *The firſt Miſtake in that notion.*

Secondly, The other Miſtake is, that this righteouſneſs is made ours, upon no other terms, than that of *believing* it is ſo. This is not onely a *falſe*, but alſo a moſt *dangerous* opinion. LIX. *The ſecond Miſtake.*

Theoph. You have not, I ſuppoſe, forgotten that I informed you that thoſe they call the *Moral Preachers* are careful to ſhew the falſity and defectiveneſs of ſome Definitions of Faith, of dangerous conſequence; and this is one of the *falſe* ones; namely, that *It is a taking hold of*

Part I.

Chriſts righteouſneſs; or *a believing that it is made over to us.* Which is the ſame, as I ſaid, with *Strongly fancying it to be ours.*

L. X. *A falſe definition of faith they confute in their Preaching.*

Philal. You ſaid that they are deſpiſed, as men unacquainted with the great Myſtery of *believing*; this is a *myſterious* Faith indeed.

Theoph. It is ſo; for I count nothing ſo myſterious, and hard to be underſtood, as the thing called *Nonſence*; which I am ſure this Definition is, according to *their ſence* of it, that will not admit of any other, but one worded after that manner: for they underſtand Chriſts righteouſneſs, in the moſt *proper* ſence, and not for the advantages redounding to believers by it. I ſpeak of thoſe that are truly *Antinomians.*

Phil. But why do not thoſe friends of ours uſe at all, or but ſeldom, the phraſe *Imputed righteouſneſs?*

Theoph. What need they, ſo long as they preach the Doctrine? I mean,

mean, all that is true of it. But to ſay the truth, thoſe mens very untoward notion, hath ſo leavened the heads of the Vulgar, that they can ſcarcely hear of Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs, but they are ready to make an ill uſe of it, by taking from thence an occaſion to entertain low and diſparaging thoughts of an inward real righteouſneſs. I have too good reaſon to ſuſpect this. So that, to deal freely with you, I think it would be well if it were never uſed, except when there is an opportunity of alſo explaining it.

Philal. What you ſay is conſiderable; but is it not a Scripture-phraſe? And I have heard you ſay, that you could wiſh that points of Faith were uſed to be expreſſed, as they are in Scripture.

Theoph. It would ordinarily be to very good purpoſe if they were; and therefore theſe Divines preaching the Doctrine of Remiſſion of

Part I.

ſins through the bloud of Chriſt, do preach all that is true of the Doctrine of Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs, in *Scripture*-language. For, as a Learned Divine ſaith, *If you preſcind it from remiſſion of ſins through the ſacrifice of Chriſt on the Croſs, this phraſe of Imputative righteouſneſs hath no ſignification at all; and that therefore there is no damage done to our Religion, if it be not accounted a diſtinct Article from the remiſſion of ſins in the bloud of Chriſt. For it cannot afford any true and uſeful ſence diſtinct therefrom; nay I may ſay, any that is not very miſchievous and dangerous, and ſuch as tends to that loathſome and peſtilential errour of Antinomianiſm.* Thus far he. But take notice moreover, that this expreſſion, *Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs*, or *the imputation of Chriſts righteouſneſs*, is not to be found in all the Bible. Nor in any of the places where we finde

Preface to *The myſtery of Godlineſs*, P. 27.

finde the word *imputed* relating to *righteouſneſs*, is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt at all to be underſtood; but onely an effectual Faith which is the very ſame with inherent righteouſneſs, which, as I ſaid, *is that Moral* righteouſneſs onely, that thoſe Preachers may be juſtly charged with altogether inſiſting upon.

LXI. *Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs no Scripture-phraſe.*

Phil. I wiſh we had time, before we go farther, to conſider thoſe places.

Theoph. There are but two Chapters in all the New Teſtament, where we finde the word *imputed* mentioned as relating to *righteouſneſs*. One is the Fourth to the *Romans*, and the other the Second of S. *James*. In the Fourth to the *Romans* we have it four or five times; and it is moſt evident, that there ſtill it is to be interpreted as I ſaid. For the Apoſtles deſigne in that Chapter is to prove againſt the Jews, that the obſervance of the *Moſaical* Rites, whereof Circumciſion

LXII. *Some verſes in the fourth to the* Romans *conſidered.*

Part I. was the chief, is not necessary to mens justification or acceptance with God; and this he proves by the instance of *Abraham*, who was accepted, and also very *high* in the divine favour, even while he was in Uncircumcision. Now in several verses, his Faith (which we know was not *idle*, but very *operative*) is said to be *imputed unto him for righteousness* in his uncircumcised estate; *i. e.* it was of the same account with God, ἐλογίσθη, it was *reckoned*, (as in two verses it is there translated) or it was *valued* by God, at as high a rate, as if it were complete righteousness. And in like manner the Apostle assureth the *Romans* two or three several times, that all that *believe* in Christ, (whereby we are to understand such a Faith as *Abrahams* was) *their* Faith shall also be imputed for righteousness to *them*, (without the addition of the *works of the Law*) as *his* was to *him*.

And

Part I.

LXIII. *S.* James 2. 23. *considered.*

And then we have the phraſe again, *James* 2. 23. But *there* is onely a repetition of the ſame that S. *Paul* had ſaid concerning *Abraham*, *viz.* that *he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs*; which is a quotation out of *Geneſis* 15. 6. Now this place of S. *James* will farther explicate that of S. *Paul*. S. *James* ſaith, verſ. 21. that *Abraham was juſtified by works*, that is, (as appears by the next verſe) an obediential *Faith*, or Faith expreſſing and exerting it ſelf by good works. And then it followeth, *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs.* Nothing can be plainer, than that this is the Apoſtle's meaning: This working faith of *Abraham*, was accounted or accepted by God for righteouſneſs. For as it was the deſigne of S. *Paul*, in the foremention'd Chapter, to prove againſt the Jews, or Judaizing Chriſtians, that

Part I. Justification was to be had without the meer external works of the *Mosaical* dispensation; and that these could have no influence into it: so is it S. *James's*, in this Chapter, to prove, it is like against the *Gnosticks*, who were *Ranting Antinomians*, the absolute necessity of new obedience, in order to mens being received into Gods favour; and that justifying faith must be productive of good works. Now as S. *Paul* proved what he designed, by shewing that *Abraham* was justified by *faith* without the *works* of the Law; so S. *James* proveth his designe by shewing, that the faith *Abraham* was justified by was such as discovered it self by obedience to Gods commands; and instanceth in the highest act of obedience too, *viz.* his offering *Isaac* upon the Altar.

Philal. All this is as clear as can be. But, *Theophilus*, is that place of

LXIV. Philippians 3. 9. *considered.*

of S. *Paul*, *Philippians* 3. 9. to be underſtood of *inherent* righteouſneſs? where he ſaith, that he chiefly deſires to *be found in Chriſt*, *not having his own righteouſneſs which is of the Law*, *but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.*

Theoph. There can be no other there intended by this later righteouſneſs. For we learn by the preceding verſes, that by *his* own *righteouſneſs which is of the Law*, he meant that which conſiſted in the obſervance of the Jewiſh Law; which he calleth his *own*, as being that which before his converſion he gloried in, or rather, as being that which he could obtain by his own natural power, it conſiſting of meerly *external* performances. And it is as evident by the verſe following, that by *the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith*, which he oppoſeth to his *own*, and that *which is of the Law*,

Part I.

Law, he means the righteousness of the new creature, wrought in him by Gods holy Spirit; and is an effect or fruit of believing Christs Gospel: For see how he goes on: *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. i. e.* That I may experimentally know *him*, and the power of his *resurrection*, in raising me up to newness of life; and of his *death*, in killing and mortifying all my corrupt affections.

Well, *Philalethes*, considering what hath been said, is it not matter of wonder, that any but arrant Hypocrites should desire to have more told them, than that God is so pleased with the Active and Passive obedience of his Son Jesus, as that for his sake he will reward those, that accept of him for their Lord and Saviour, though they are very weak and imperfect, as if they were altogether

gether ſpotleſs and ſinleſs perſons? And is it not every jot as high a favour, and as great an expreſſion of the Divine grace, to be dealt with as if we were perfectly righteous, as to be ſo judged and eſteemed?

Part I.

LXV. *As high a favour to be dealt with as if we were perfectly righteous as to be ſo eſteemed.*

Philal. I ſhould think him as blinde as a Beetle that doth not ſee it is. But though I ſaid, the *Antinomian* notion of imputed righteouſneſs is of dangerous conſequence; yet now I remember me, the defenders thereof have a way to evade it; for they ſay, that *though a real inward righteouſneſs is no qualification required to this imputation of Chriſts righteouſneſs, and ſo to our* juſtification; *yet it will follow of it ſelf, by way of gratitude, and therefore will be found in men, before their* Salvation.

Theoph. I will anſwer you to this, in the words of an excellent Doctor: *This is like to prove but a ſlippery hold, when it is believed that*

Dr. *Cudworth* in his Serm. preached at *Lincolns* Inne.

Part I. *that gratitude it ſelf, as well as all other graces, is in them already by imputation.* What Reply they can make hereunto, I am not able to imagine.

Philal. I am not like to help you. To ſay the truth, it is a moſt ſottiſh and miſchievous Doctrine; and muſt needs do a world of hurt among people that are glad of any pretence for their carnality and diſobedience.

Theoph. I know too many that make uſe of it to patronize their ungodly practices; and no queſtion, it is the grand ſupport of *moſt*, if not of *all* hypocrites. A very worthy perſon, preaching ſome time ſince, upon the words of *Zacheus*, the neceſſity of Reſtitution, where there is ability, in caſe of fraud; one of his Auditors was heard to ſay, as he was going out of the Church, *If the Doctrine now taught us be true, how are we beholden to Jeſus Chriſt?*

And

And multitudes, I fear, of our meerly imputatively-righteous men *think* what that Gentleman had the face to ſpeak.

Philal. You may well fear it; for there is no conſequence more natural from *any* Doctrine, than is *this* from *thoſe* mens, *viz. That real righteouſneſs, or inherent holineſs, is a needleſs thing in order to eternal happineſs.*

LXVI. *The dangerous conſequence of the Antinomian doctrine about imputed righteouſneſs.*

Theoph. The light at noon-day is not clearer, than is that inference: for if a perſon may have in his unregenerate or ſinful ſtate Chriſts righteouſneſs made his, and ſo be eſteemed by God as perfectly righteous; what ſhould hinder but that in the ſame ſtate, he may be admitted to enjoy the *reward* of a righteous man? If an ungodly man may be *juſtified*, and declared righteous, why may he not alſo be *ſaved* and made happie?

Philal. But they will tell you, that

Part I. that it is expreſly aſſerted by S. *Paul*, *That God juſtifieth the ungodly.*

Rom. 4. 5.

Theoph. I cannot conceive why it may not be admitted, that the word that ſignifieth *to juſtifie*, is in divers places to be underſtood for making *really juſt*, or *ſanctifying*: for becauſe it is ſometimes to be taken in a forenſick ſence, it doth not therefore follow that it muſt always be ſo. But I will willingly grant, that it is to be ſo underſtood here, if that by *the ungodly* may be meant thoſe that were once ſo; that is, *before*, not at the *ſame time* when they were juſtified. For to ſay that God can pronounce a perſon juſt & righteous, that is unjuſt and unrighteous, is the greateſt contradiction imaginable to his *own* juſtice, his *own* righteouſneſs. This makes him to pronounce a perfectly falſe ſentence, and to do that which *Prov.* 17. 5. he himſelf had declared *an abomination.* Nor can we entertain

tain a more unworthy thought of the Holy God, than to conceive, that he hath no greater antipathy againſt *ſin*, than to make *him*, that alloweth and liveth in it, an object of his *complacential* love. Part I.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, to ſay the truth, I have obſerved that thoſe men make ſuch a thing of *ſin*, as that it may become God well enough to reconcile himſelf thereunto, as well as to him that lives in it. For they make it a meer indifferent thing in it ſelf, and to depend onely upon arbitrary laws, the evil of which is founded upon the alone *will* of God; as you gave me an intimation at our entrance on this Diſcourſe. Which account of ſin doth plainly, as you ſaid, undermine all Religion; and therefore the *Antinomian* opinion of *imputed righteouſneſs*, as abſurd, and of as wretched conſequence as it is, may, if that be ſo, very well be true.

LXVII. *The Antinomians opinion of ſin.*

Theoph.

Theoph. It may with as great shew of reason be questioned whether *God* be essentially *good*, as whether *sin* be intrinsecally *evil* : And I admire, what those men have done to themselvs to enable them once to doubt the later, more than the former.

Philal. I hope they will call it *Blasphemy* to deny Gods essential goodness; yet in acknowledging no vertue or vice independent upon all *will*, they dwindle it away to a perfect nothing.

Theoph. I have not a more undoubted assurance of mine own being, than of the truth of what you say. Well, *Philalethes*, those whose stomacks can digest such filthy stuff, (and such as I can shew you even *Heathens* did nauseate) need not stick at swallowing the Phancie of imputed righteousness in that gross sence, as absurd and dangerous as it is: but *we* that know how contrary

sin

ſin is to the *Nature*, as well as the *Will* of God, cannot queſtion, that no man that is in love with it can, by vertue of anothers Righteouſneſs, be eſteemed or dealt with by God as righteous.

Philal. When I can once ſee a diſeaſed or lame man made well and ſound, by anothers imputed health and ſoundneſs, I may imagine a wicked man made righteous, by the imputation of anothers righteouſneſs; but before I cannot; as well knowing that wickedneſs is as really a *moral*, as ſickneſs or lameneſs is a *natural* evil.

Theoph. If you don't fancie it till then, to be ſure you never will.

Philal. They are both alike contradictions. But, I pray, *Theophilus*, now I think on't, how can thoſe that hug, and are ſo fond of this ill-favoured notion, have any opinion of Chriſts Expiatory Sacrifice for the forgiveneſs of ſins; for how can

Part I. there be any ſin to be pardoned, where a perfect and moſt complete righteouſneſs is imputed?

Theoph. That queſtion is put by the laſt mentioned Doctor; but I believe he will wait long enough for a ſatisfactory anſwer to it.

Philal. Is it poſſible, think you, that there ſhould be any *good* men of this Perſwaſion?

LXVIII. Theophilus *his charity for ſome Antinomians.*

Theoph. As apt as I am to cenſure and condemn ſome *doctrines*, I would be as backward to paſs ſentence on the perſons of thoſe that hold them. And I muſt tell you, I verily hope that there are pious men of that opinion we are now perſtringing; but know too, that thoſe of them that are ſo, are ſo weak as not to underſtand the true conſequences of their Doctrine; and ſo honeſt, as, at firſt hearing, to abhor them: And were led to like well of it, not out of a deſigne to gratifie any baſe luſt; but becauſe it ſeemed

to

to them, to have a ſhew of humility and ſelf-denial, and to advance Gods grace. Part I.

Philal. As charitable as you are towards them, I fear that they (if not thoſe alſo that are too neer of kin to them) had they heard your paſt diſcourſe, would pronounce you an Heretick.

Theoph. And what if they ſhould? I ſhould pitie them as weak, but not condemn them as wicked for ſo doing. The excellent *Melanchon* was called a worſe name by *Luther*; and the worſt hurt I wiſh them is, that I could upon as good grounds return that anſwer to *them*, that he did to *him*: which was to this effect; *Though Luther calls me Devil, yet I will call Luther a moſt pious ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt.* Beſides, we need not now-a-days look upon our ſelvs as having any great injury done to us by being called *Hereticks*; that name being grown (as you know

Part I. who ſpeaks) a meer *Theological Scare-crow*: and moreover, there is no man but is ſo *reputed*, if not ſo *called*, by ſome or other. But yet, miſtake me not ſo, as if I thought that to be really a Heretick, and in a Scripture-ſence, were a trivial and light matter: for I am far from ſo thinking; being well aware, that the Apoſtle reckons *Hereſies* with *Adulteries*, *Laſciviouſneſs*, *Idolatry*, *Witchcrafts*, *Hatred*, *Seditions*, and other *fruits of the fleſh*, which will undoubtedly exclude men out of Gods kingdom.

LXIX. *A defective definition of Faith, that thoſe Divines preach againſt, and the ill conſequence of it.*

Philal. You intimated that there is more than one definition of Juſtifying Faith, which thoſe they call the *Moral Preachers* concern themſelvs to bring their Hearers out of conceit with.

Theoph. There is another, that they judge as *defective*, as that we have given our ſence of is *falſe*; which is this: That *it is a recumbence*

hence or resting on Christ for salvation. There are those which I cannot but think are very good men, that will by no means endure that any more should be admitted into its definition. Now these men, I acknowledge, make inherent holiness otherwise necessary, than as that which must needs follow, by way of gratitude, upon a sense of their being in a justified state: for they make it, a necessary qualification to *Salvation*, though not to *Justification.* But herein *they* also fall into the *Antinomian* Errour; that they, or at least their doctrine supposeth a man capable of Gods favour so far as to have his sins pardoned, before he is purged from them, I mean freed from their reigning power. Part I.

Philal. These differ from the other men, as I suppose, in *this* also, That they do not make Justification to be from Eternity, as *they* do.

Theoph. You say well; they do not approve of that mad Phancie, but make Justification to follow upon Believing: but then, that Believing they judge necessary to Justification, they make such a scanty thing as I now said; and will not hear of making receiving Christ as Lord, or being willing to obey his precepts, a prerequisite to the obtaining of that priviledge. And so their doctrine is too plainly liable to the ill consequences of the other mens.

Philal. Do they not onely say, that good *works* are not necessary to Justification?

Theoph. No, that I am sure they do not: for, as I told you, they will not admit so much as a *willingness* to perform them into the definition of Justifying faith: And besides, they assert that good works are not always necessary to *Salvation* it self neither; as when a person is converted

at

at the point of death. Wherein they say truly, if any are; which can be known to none but God onely. But then observe moreover, that these persons will not have their Faith a *condition* of Justification, but an *instrument*. Part I.

Philal. But why are they so shie of that phrase, and so fond of this?

Theoph. Their pretence is, that to make any condition of Justification, is to derogate from the freeness of Gods grace therein. But to that we shall have occasion to speak anon.

Philal. Our Salvation, as well as Justification, is ascribed to Gods grace; but sure they will grant that *that* hath conditions.

Theoph. Conditions must take from the freeness of the one, as well as of the other; but therefore, they being aware of it, will not call what is necessary to Salvation *proper conditions*, but rather qualifications;

Part I. men having, they ſay, no hand in them, but are the meer effects of the Holy Ghoſt.

Philal. Will they not grant then, that the Covenant of Grace is conditional? if it be not, it is, ſure enough, no Covenant: for I underſtand not what a Covenant means, and how it is diſtinguiſhable from a *meer* or abſolute promiſe, if it be not conditional.

Theoph. No more can any mortal. Therefore they talk ſtrangely in the clouds as to this matter; ſo that I confeſs, I can by no means underſtand them; I wiſh they underſtand themſelvs. For becauſe there are ſo many promiſes in the Goſpel that run as conditionally as words can expreſs them, they are ſhie of ſaying, with the *Antinomians*, that *the Covenant of Grace is not conditional*; but then they tell us that all the priviledges therein contained ſhall be abſolutely beſtowed on thoſe that they

they are promiſed to; and ſo, in my weak judgement, they plainly deny all conditionality therein notwithſtanding. And they think themſelvs warranted thus to expreſs themſelvs, by *Jeremiah* 31.33. and the quotation of that place, *Hebrews* 8. 10. But to theſe places we will ſpeak anon. Part I.

Philal. Well, I perceive, *theſe* alſo are *obſcurers* of *plain*, and I had almoſt ſaid too, *ſpoilers* of *good* Divinity, as well as the other men: for the conſequences of their Doctrine, will, I fear, be found to have too untoward an influence upon the practice of too many that underſtand them; though they do not ſhew themſelvs quite ſo ſoon, as thoſe that follow from the former Doctrine.

Theoph. I wiſh they could as eaſily diſcern Conſequences, as I ſee you do: for my charity leads me to believe that very many of them have

Part I.

have so much unkindness for them; as that they would then for their sakes bid adieu to the beloved premisses. But, *Philalethes*, there are other more moderate and wise persons, and many of them men of excellent worth, who being sensible how greatly Protestants have exposed themselvs to the Papists lash, by that doctrine make *receiving of Christ as both Lord and Saviour to be justifying Faith.* (Which I acknowledge to be a very true and full definition.) But yet they say, that though this alone is the Faith that justifieth, yet as it justifieth, it receives Christ as *Saviour* onely; or consists in relying on his merits.

LXX. *A full definition of Faith ill applied to the business of justifying.*

Philal. But is not this marveilous subtile?

Theoph. Truly it seems so to *me*; and I believe, at least, to all *vulgar* capacities.

Philal. But why will they not admit, that receiving Christ *quâ Lord*,

Lord, as well as *qua Saviour*, juſtifieth?

Theoph. Becauſe they ſay Juſtification is often denied to *works*, and onely aſcribed to *faith*. But they apprehend not a difference between theſe two, otherwiſe than by making *faith*, relying on Chriſts merits; and *works*, yeelding obedience to his precepts. But, therefore, that they may reconcile Juſtification by Faith alone, with taking obedience (or a willingneſs to obey) into juſtifying Faith, (which they are convinc'd they muſt do, or they ſhall make mad work on't) that is, that they may make S. *James* not to contradict S. *Paul*, they ſay that juſtifying Faith muſt be a working obediential Faith; yet *as* it juſtifieth muſt be conſidered as diſtinct from obedience. But becauſe it is replied, that to rely upon Chriſts merits, is an act of obedience, or a *work*; they anſwer, that though it be, yet

it

Part I. it doth not juſtifie *as* it is a work; and therefore with the other men, they will not have it called a *condition* of Juſtification, but the *inſtrument*.

Philal. But don't you think that this elaborate acuteneſs might be well ſpared, by underſtanding works when they are undervalued comparatively to grace and faith, as quite diſtinct things from ſincere obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt?

Theoph. I am verily perſwaded it may; and that the way, in which thoſe that are called the *Moral Preachers* go, as to this point, will be made as clear as our hearts can wiſh, by ſo underſtanding them.

Philal. I deſire you to give me as full an account, as briefly you can, how they deliver this doctrine of Faith, in reference to Juſtification.

Theoph. Juſtifying Faith (becauſe they would expreſs themſelvs as plainly as may be, in a matter of moſt

moſt weighty importance) they deſcribe much after this manner: That *It is ſo full a perſwaſion, that Chriſt Jeſus is the Saviour of Mankinde, and that his Goſpel is true, as cauſeth a hearty and ſincere willingneſs to yeild obedience to all his precepts; or to take that courſe, which he hath preſcribed in order to Salvation.*

LXXI. *A full and plain definition of Faith uſed by thoſe Preachers.*

Philal. This is plain enough: And I ſhould think, not capable of being miſunderſtood.

Theoph. Though I cannot ſay that I ſpeak the words of any of them; yet ſure I am, that *thoſe* I have heard them uſe, in defining juſtifying faith, are as eaſily intelligible as *theſe* are, and have the ſame ſence.

Philal. I have heard you heretofore ſay, that when you were a youth, you was taught this definition, *viz. Juſtifying faith is a grace of the holy Spirit, whereby a man, being convinced of his ſin, and miſerable*

Part I. *serable estate in regard of it, and an all-sufficiencie in Christ to save from both, receives him as he is tendered in the Gospel, or according to his three Offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.* What fault can be found with the wording of this?

Theoph. None at all; nor is a better definition of Faith desirable: I was taught *this*, when other kinde of definitions of that grace were all the Mode, by a most *judicious*, as well as *pious* Divine: (I cannot forbear to call him so, though he is of all men most nearly related to me) & to *him* I shall ever acknowledge my self obliged, for first rightly instructing me in this point, and antidoting me against the forementioned false notions concerning it, with divers others that were highly by very many cryed up in *those*, as well as in *these* wilde days.

Philal. You are not less beholden to that Reverend and worthy person,

son, upon those accounts, than you are for your very *being*. But, I pray, do the Preachers you have undertaken to represent, not onely say that Justifying faith includes obedience, but also, that it justifieth *as* it doth so?

LXXII. *Of that Doctrine of these Preachers, that Faith justifieth as it implieth obedience.*

Theoph. Yes, *Philalethes*, that they do. For they do not think that the Scriptures make any difference between the two forementioned acts of faith, as to the influence it hath upon Justification; and that not without cause. S. *Paul* tells us, *Gal.*5.6. that *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing*; (he means especially as to Justification, as appears by vers.4) *but faith that worketh by love*; which takes in the whole of obedience; and there he stops. The Apostle troubleth not himself to give any caution to the *Galatians*, that they should not understand him as if his meaning was any more than this,

That

Part I. *That justifying faith worketh by love*; or as if he had said, *That faith justifieth* as *it worketh by love.*

Philal. There comes into my minde an Argument, that seems to me demonstrative, that there is to be made no distinction between those acts of faith in justifying: namely, the Scriptures assure us, that our Saviours death was intended not onely to deliver us from *wrath*, but from *sin* too; and it is plain that this later was its *immediate* end; deliverance from wrath being a consequent of deliverance from sin: And therefore faith in Christs bloud must needs justifie as it designs obtaining *this*, as well as *that.*

LXXIII. *An argument to prove that Faith justifieth as it receivs Christ* quâ *Lord, as well as* quâ *Saviour.*

Theoph. Your Argument will rather prove more than that for which you bring it, *viz.* That if those acts of faith be at all to be distinguished in the business of Justification, the greater stress is to be laid on that, which complieth with the principal

end

end of our Saviours death. And ſo, if we muſt be making compariſons, Faith juſtifieth as it receives Chriſt *quâ* Lord, rather than *quâ* Prieſt or Saviour. But however, I am not for any compariſons, they being perfectly needleſs, and nothing gotten by them. Part I.

Philal. That act of receiving Chriſt as Lord, is to go before that of receiving him as Prieſt: for we *may* not rely upon him for ſalvation, till we are willing to yeeld obedience to him. LXXIV. *The act of receiving Chriſt quâ Lord, to go before that of receiving him quâ Prieſt.*

Theoph. 'Tis moſt true; we have not any ground at all ſo to do: we muſt be willing to be to our power univerſally obedient, before we take that confidence.

Philal. Before you go farther, I pray tell me what diſtinction you would make betwixt Faith and Repentance, and the other graces allo, if its nature be extended ſo far as to imply obedience.

Part I.

LXXV. *How faith is distinguisht from repentance and other vertues, in the business of Justification.*

Theoph. The Scriptures are seldom so curious, when they speak of Faith, or Repentance, or the love, or fear, or knowledge of God, &c. as to understand them in so restrained a sence, as to abstract them from other vertues: but sometimes they express all by one. We finde in multitudes of places some one of the principal vertues put to express the whole of practical Religion; as each of those last mentioned; of which I need not give you instances. And whereas Faith and Repentance are sometimes distinguished, it is onely because believing the Gospel implieth more than bare Repentance in its strict notion. *Irenæus* therefore gives this honest description of faith in Christ: *Credere ei est facere ejus voluntatem*: To believe in Christ is to do his will. Moreover, we shall finde that Justification, and Remission of sins, (for the Scripture makes no difference betwixt

twixt thoſe two) is ſometimes aſcribed to other vertues, as well as to Faith: but then they are underſtood either in ſo general a ſence, as to include Faith, or as ſuppoſing it. For inſtance, *Acts* 3. 19. 'tis attributed to converſion and repentance: *Repent and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out.* To forgiveneſs of treſpaſſes, *Matth.* 6. 14. *If you forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you.* To ſhewing mercy, *Mat.* 5. 7. *Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy.* To works, or ſincere obedience, *James* 2. 24. *A man is juſtified by* works, *and not by* faith *onely.* Where Faith is taken in a more ſtrict ſence, and Works ſuppoſe Faith. That is, A man is juſtified by an effectual working faith, and not by faith without works. And again, verſ. 21. ſaith he, *Was not our father Abraham juſtified by works?* who yet, according to S. Part I.

Part I.

Paul, was justified by faith. But whereas Justification is mostly attributed to *faith*, the reason is, because all other graces are vertually therein contained; and that is the Principle from whence they are derived.

LXXVI. *Why justification is mostly ascribed to faith.*

Philal. I pray inform me next, *Theophilus*, what influence it is that those Preachers tell their people Faith hath upon Justification; or how it justifieth.

Theoph. I should not have forgotten this, though you had not minded me, in the least, of it: for it is of as great importance to be spoken to, as most of the heads of our past discourse. Observe therefore, That Faith sometimes signifieth in Scripture the Doctrine of faith, or the Gospel: so it is to be understood, *Gal.* 3. 23, 25. and in several other places. But it ordinarily signifieth the vertue or duty of believing; and so it is variously expressed; as by *believing on the Son of God*, and the re-

LXXVII. *Two acceptations of the word* Faith.

LXXviii *The vertue of faith variously expressed in Scripture.*

record that God gave of his Son, 1 Joh. 5. 10. *Believing the word or words of Christ,* Joh. 5. 47. *Believing Christ to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world,* Joh. 8. 24. Joh. 11. 26, 27. *Receiving of Christ,* Joh. 1. 12. All which are to be understood in a practical sence. For as the Scriptures scarcely ever call any other the knowledge of God, but that which hath the end of knowledge, *viz.* obedience: so do they make nothing true believing, but that which hath the ends of faith, or causeth men to do those things for the sake of which it is required. Part I.

LXXIX. *How faith justifieth.*

Now as Faith is put for the Doctrine of faith, so those Preachers are content it should justifie as an instrument, *viz.* as it containeth the Covenant of grace, and holdeth forth pardon to sinners; and so it justifieth, as the Law condemneth.

As it signifieth the vertue or duty

Part I. of faith, so it justifieth as it is the condition of the new Covenant, wherein forgiveness of sin is offered. God the Father is the principally-efficient cause of our Justification; and so it is said, that *it is God that justifieth*: Jesus Christ justifieth as the onely meritorious, or procuring cause; the Gospel as the instrumental cause; and faith therein, as the condition without which we cannot be justified, and to which that priviledge is assured.

The new Covenant offereth pardon of sin and eternal life to us, upon the condition of believing in Christ: *So God loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth shall be saved*, &c. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

Philal. This is a very easie account of Faiths justifying.

Theoph.

Theoph. Nothing ſeems to me to be more plain; as obſcure a buſineſs as 'tis made.

Philal. But what cannot the wit of men make difficult?

LXXX. *The Covenant of grace conditional.*

Theoph. Firſt, there is nothing more evident (as we ſaid) than that the new Covenant is conditional; and that God doth not therein promiſe abſolutely pardon of ſin and the conſequent bleſſings.

Philal. The great place that is produced againſt the conditionality of the Covenant of grace, is that which you ſaid you would ſpeak to, *viz.* that quotation out of *Jeremiah* that we finde in *Heb.* 10.8. where God ſeemeth in his Covenant to promiſe to do all, in order to our eternal happineſs, and to require nothing of us.

Theoph. It is in a good hand: I pray do you anſwer that Objection.

Philal. Were I duller than I am, I think I could eaſily enough appre-

Part 1.

hend a satisfactory answer to it, *viz.* That a condition is there implied: for the meaning of those words [*I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them in their inward parts*] cannot be, *I will do all for them, they need do nothing at all*; this would make all the precepts of the Gospel most wretchedly insignificant, (nor indeed do any assert this, but some very monstrously wilde-brain'd people:) nor yet, as appears from many other Scriptures, can *this* be the sence; *I will sanctifie their natures, and so cause them to keep my laws, without their concurrence in that act*: but, *I will afford them my Grace and Spirit, whereby, they co-operating therewith, and not being wilfully wanting to themselvs, shall be enabled so to do.* Or, *I will do all that reasonable creatures can* reasonably *expect from Me, towards the writing of my laws in their hearts, & putting them into their inward*

LXXXI. Heb. 8. 10. *considered.*

ward parts. Whatsoever God may do for *some* persons out of his *superabundant* grace, doubtless this is all that he either here or elsewhere *engageth* himself to do for any. Part I.

Theoph. This exposition of yours is a very good one, most agreeable with the analogie of Faith, and fully answers the forementioned Objection. But there are very judicious Expositors that are led by the consideration of the verse following thus to interpret this place, *viz. This is the Covenant that I will make in the times of the Gospel; I will instead of those external and carnal ordinances, which the house of Israel hath for a long time been obliged to the observance of, give them onely such precepts as are most agreeable to their reason and understandings, and such as wherein they may discern essential goodness: and by this great expression of my grace to them,* (as also that which is expressed in the 12 verse,

Part I. verſe, namely, aſſurance of pardon to all reforming ſinners, of all paſt wickedneſſes whatſoever, and all preſent frailties and weakneſſes) I *ſhall not onely convince them of their duty, but alſo, ſtrongly encline them to the chearful performance of it.* And then it follows, very pertinently to this ſence, in verſ. 11. *And they ſhall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, Know the Lord: for all ſhall know me, from the leaſt to the greateſt.* i.e. *There ſhall be no need of ſuch pains, in teaching men how they muſt obey the Lord, and what they are to do, as there was under the Law of Moſes, (which conſiſted in obſervations that were onely good becauſe commanded, and had no internal goodneſs in them to commend them to the reaſon of men, and which might cauſe it to prompt them to them;) but the precepts now given, ſhall be found written by every*

man

man in his own heart, ſo that none need be ignorant of what is enjoyned for the ſubſtance of it, that will but conſult the dictates of their own natures. For a confirmation of this ſenſe, ſee *Deut.* 30. 11, 12, 13, 14 verſ. *Moſes* having in the later part of verſ. 10. put the people upon turning to the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their ſoul; and before ſhewed that it was their duty to love the Lord their God with all their heart and ſoul, which you know containeth the ſubſtance of what is enjoyned in the new Covenant, and was no part of that which was required by the Law, that is called in a ſtrict ſence the *Jewiſh & Moſaical, (which,* as the Apoſtle ſaith, *was added becauſe of tranſgreſſion, till the ſeed ſhould come to whom the promiſes were made*; not as any new condition whereby they were to attain to the promiſes, but that they ſhould till they were fulfilled,

be

Part I. be reſtrained and kept under a ſtrict outward diſcipline backt on by temporal rewards and puniſhments) I ſay, having over and above his own Law, exhorted them to the obſervance of thoſe duties, wherein the ſubſtance of thoſe commanded in the Goſpel conſiſteth, (and which may be found ſprinkled up and down in the other Prophets, as well as *his* writings, and doubtleſs were more compleatly delivered to them by tradition from their fathers) he thus ſaith in the 11 verſe, and the three following: *For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: it is not in heaven, that thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Who ſhall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the ſea, that thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Who ſhall go over the ſea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word*

word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayſt do it. By the word in their *heart* at leaſt, we are certainly to underſtand, the forementioned ſpiritual, and eſſentially good precepts: for ſo is it interpreted by S. *Paul*, *Rom.* 10. 6,7,8. Part I.

Philal. I am hugely pleaſed with the Paraphraſe you have given, and muſt needs ſay, that of theſe two (conſidering the context) it ſeemeth the moſt natural.

Theoph. But however, *their* interpretation of this place, that endeavour to prove from it the non-conditionality of the new Covenant, is by no means to be endured; it being of ſo very ill conſequence, and alſo ſo flatly contradicting the apparent ſence of multitudes of Scriptures as it doth; whereby we are aſſured that God expects that the working of *his* and our *own* ſpirits ſhould go together, and be con-

junct

Part I. junct causes co-operating one and the self-same effect.

LXXXII *Men not without all power to co-operate with Gods grace in their conversion.*

Philal. If men have no power, as those people say, to co-operate at all with the grace of God, in the mortification of their lusts, or the renovation of their natures, S. *James* did very strangely forget himself, when he said, *Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purifie your hearts ye double minded.*

Theoph. The truth is, the Scripture seems one while to give all to *God* in the work of Regeneration and Conversion; and another while to make it wholly mens own act. And as in that place to the *Hebrews*, it may seem, at first sight, that all is to be done by *God*; so doth *God* in other places express himself, as if *man* were to do all in this work: as, *Cast away from you all your iniquities; Make you a new heart and a new spirit; turn your selves and live ye. Wash you, make you clean, put away*

away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. And you know that I could tire you with ſayings to the ſame purpoſe. Part I.

Philal. Therefore we muſt interpret ſuch places *ſo*, as to reconcile them to each other.

LXXXiii *A middle way to be taken in giving account of mens converſion.*

Theoph. And to this end we muſt go in a middle way, and avoid the extremes on both hands, or we ſhall never do ſo. I mean, that where God ſpeaks as if *he* did all in this great work, we are to judge, that he ſuppoſeth mens endeavours; and where he ſpeaks as if *men* were to do all, that he ſuppoſeth the concurrence and aſſiſtance of his own grace.

But as I ſaid that nothing is more evident than that the new Covenant is *conditional* : ſo, ſecondly, there is nothing more *plainly* or *frequently* expreſſed, than that *Faith* is the condition of it ; and therefore I ſhall not need to inſiſt upon it.

LXXXiv *Faith the condition of the new Covenant.*

Philal.

Part I.

Philal. You said that those Preachers are accused by many Hot men, for this doctrine, as persons Popishly affected, and holding Justification by works; and therefore enemies to the freeness of Gods grace.

LXXXV *Of their being accused for the foregoing doctrine, as holding justification by works, and enemies to Gods grace.*

Theoph. I foresaw, that in this part of our discourse, you would put me upon vindicating them from this high charge; and therefore when I had occasion given me to do it, I chose (as you may remember) to defer it longer, because this is the propereſt place for it.

Philal. But suppose the consequences of this doctrine were so very foul as those men think they are; would it not be, notwithstanding, very uncharitably done of them, to censure the Preachers of it so highly upon that account?

LXXXVI *A digression concerning censuring men upon the account of their opinions.*

Theoph. Yes verily, *Philalethes*, this would not excuse them at all from unchristian uncharitableness: for they ought to hope (seeing they profess

profeſs to magnifie free grace no leſs than themſelvs, and concern themſelvs to confute the Papiſts as much as any, not to ſay more) that they do not underſtand the evil conſequences of their Doctrine; and that, if they did, they would moſt willingly and freely renounce it. Part I.

Philal. If thoſe Preachers ſhould retaliate, (as I hope they are better Chriſtians than to do ſo) they might call theſe their cenſurers worſe than Papiſts; I mean, *Libertines* and *Ranters*: for they are as ſtrongly perſwaded, that *their* notions about juſtifying Faith, and ſome other, lead to *Looſeneſs* and *Libertiniſm*, as theſe are, that *theirs* lead to *Popery*.

Theoph. But they dare not, I hope, ſo much as ſuſpect, that thoſe of them that ſeem to make any conſcience of their ways, are at all aware of the Poiſon that is in ſome of their Opinions; but judge that their *meaning*

Part I.

ing is much better than their *Faith*.

Philal. I for my part can truly say, that I think not at all hardly of them for the sake of their false Tenets, so long as I do not observe that they practise upon them; but I am sometimes very shrewdly tempted to fear, upon the account of the Reviling and Censuring not a few of them are guilty of, that they are no better than meer pretenders to Religion, as great a profession as they make of it: For S. *James* hath taught me, that, *He that seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue that mans Religion is vain.*

Theoph. But perhaps they may mean as honestly in the *one* as in the *other*; and 'tis possible that their angry expressions may not be the effects of *malice*, but of a certain kinde of *zeal*.

Philal. Well, *Theophilus*, I will endeavour after more of your charitable temper: If you judge too well

well of thoſe people, it is a ſafe and good extreme: *Charity*, I confeſs, *hopeth all things*, and *believeth all things*, even there, where are too great temptations to the contrary. Part I.

Theoph. When we can put a favourable conſtruction upon our brothers faults, and not offer over-great violence to our own Reaſon, we ought to do it; and to look upon them as proceeding rather from infirmity, than from a principle of immorality. But yet, *Philalethes*, I would not have you take me to be more charitable than I am: for though I will not conclude thoſe cenſorious people to be all *hypocrites*, yet I dare confidently pronounce them, at beſt, but of the *loweſt fourm* in Chriſts School; as great attainments as they may be thought to be arrived at, by men of greater honeſty than underſtanding.

Philal. But we have forgotten

Part I. our buſineſs all this while.

Theoph. You do well to minde me of it. You expect, *Philalethes*, that I ſhould vindicate thoſe friends of ours, and all that are of their minde in the point in hand, from oppoſing free grace, and holding the Popiſh doctrine of Juſtification by works. They are ſo far from being guilty in theſe particulars, that I am amazed at their ignorance, that ſay they are, upon ſuch *ſlight* grounds, or rather upon *none* at all. Nor do I think that an eaſier task can be impoſed on any man, that hath but a competent underſtanding of our Saviours Goſpel, than to clear the foregoing account of Faiths juſtifying from thoſe hateful ſequels. For, whereas 'tis pretended, that *that* doctrine is an enemy to free grace; I may ask thoſe that pretend ſo, how Juſtification is free, ſeeing it is neceſſary to believe in *their* ſence in order to it: they muſt at leaſt acknow-

I.XXXvii *A Vindication of the foregoing account of faiths juſtifying from being oppoſite to free grace.*

knowledge, that if not ſo much as that lazie faith of theirs were requiſite, it would be ſo much the freer. Part I.

Philal. But the *Antinomians* will tell you, that they make no faith at all, nor any thing elſe neceſſary or requiſite to their Juſtification; and that their faith conſiſts in believing that they are already juſtified, and that they were ſo before they were born too; nay, as was ſaid, that their Juſtification is as old as God himſelf; for he could be but from eternity.

Theoph. I confeſs theſe blades are *ſwinging* aſſertors of the freeneſs of their Juſtification; and therefore the Queſtion I now asked is nothing to *them*: but I am ſure it ſignifieth ſomething to the ſecond ſort I told you of, and that are gotten about one little remove from formal *Antinomians*. But I ſay moreover, that ſuch a Faith as that we have deſcribed is abſolutely neceſſary in it

Part I. ſelf, to make us capable of that priviledge, and meet objects of Gods grace.

Will they ſay, that the Kings pardoning a notorious Traytor is ever the leſs free, becauſe that as far as he could judge of his heart, he looked on him as a perſon that was reſolved to become for the future a Loyal ſubject? Me-thinks they ſhould not; and that for this reaſon, becauſe ſuch a purpoſe is but neceſſary to qualifie him for a pardon; it being an act of greater fondneſs and folly, than of grace and goodneſs, to forgive an offender that obſtinately perſiſts in his diſobedience. Or ſuppoſe his Majeſtie ſhould confer upon one of them an honourable Office in his Court, would he ſay he bought it, or that it was not freely beſtowed upon him, becauſe his Majeſtie required that before his inveſtiture, and admiſſion into it, he ſhould learn good Breeding, and

how

how to behave himself in such a Place? Surely he would not; and that for the already-mentioned reason: this he could not but know was no more than necessary to be enjoyned him; for otherwise he could not be at all fit for the Office; and the King would greatly disparage his wisdom in making such a choice. And as little cause have any to imagine, that to assert that God will pardon, and receive into special favour, none but such, as so believe, as to be heartily willing to obey his Sons Gospel, is to derogate from the freeness of his grace. Besides, that glory and blessedness which consisteth in the enjoyment of God in the other world, which is the consequent of Justification, cannot be enjoyed by a wicked man: the joys of heaven are of so spiritual a nature, that carnal souls are as uncapable of them, as are beasts of the intellectual delights of

Part I.

Part I.

men. They are onely the pure in heart that *can*, as well as that *shall* see God. Heathens will teach us this doctrine, if we are to learn it.

Much less then, in the third place, is this doctrine of a working Faiths being the condition of our Justification, at all a lessening of the freeness of Gods grace; when as those that preach it do withal assert, that this faith is Gods own gift, a grace of his blessed Spirit. They say indeed, and that most truly, that we are to use the means appointed us by him for the obtaining of it; but they tell their hearers also, that it must come from God, if they ever have it. Could we work this faith in our selvs, and stood in no need of the divine assistance; considering what hath been said, it would make our Justification to be never the less free: much less reason then is there, that those should be charged with making it otherwise, that preach

that

that doctrine of Faiths being the condition of Justification, when they declare that the power whereby we perform that condition comes from God. Part I.

Philal. I am sure that I have no power to invent any one Reply by way of objection.

Theoph. Well then, we'll to their next Cavil; namely, that to hold this doctrine, is to maintain Justification by works: which is indeed the same in their *sence* with the former; but it is fit it should be distinctly spoken to, because S. *Paul* (in his Epistles especially to the *Romans* and *Galatians*) doth so often deny *works* to have an influence into Justification, and is found opposing them one while to *Grace*, and another while to *Faith* as to this matter. I cannot stand to cite the particular places; but the consideration of these following things will enable any man to reconcile them with this

Part I.

this Doctrine at the first sight of them.

Lxxxviii. *A vindication of that Doctrine from asserting justification by works in S.* Paul's *sence.*

1. By *the works of the Law*, whereby the Apostle saith that men cannot be justified, we are frequently to understand those of the Jewish Law, their External Rites and Observances. And so they are to be understood in *most*, if not *all* the places in the Epistle to the *Galatians*. And by the understanding of that one thing, that Epistle may with ease be defended from patronizing the *Antinomian* doctrine. The chief designe of which (as is most apparent) being to vindicate the liberty of the Christian Religion from the Judaical Yoke, which being by the Judaizing *Galatian* Converts imposed upon the Christian Gentiles as absolutely and indispensably necessary, was like to prove a mighty obstacle to the progress of the Gospel among them.

2. In some other places, by *works*

are

are meant abſolutely perfect, and altogether faultleſs ones. And we are told, that, as the Law of *Moſes* cannot, nor ever could juſtifie, by reaſon of its *own* weakneſs; ſo, the Law of perfect obedience now cannot, by reaſon of *ours*. Part I.

3. We may ſometimes underſtand *any* works, of what nature ſoever, conſidered as meritorious cauſes. Could we obey perfectly, we cannot merit thereby the pardon of paſt ſins: nay, had we never ſinned, we could *deſerve* no reward at our Creators hands, our righteouſneſs being not at all profitable to him; much leſs then can the imperfect works of ſinners be meritorious.

4. Meer external works performed by our own power in our unſanctified ſtate, that is, ſuch as proceed not from an inward principle of life, may in other places be underſtood.

But we have no ground ever to underſtand by *works* when oppoſed

to

Part I.

to Grace or Faith, inherent holiness, or new obedience to the Gospel-precepts. I dare promise an unprejudiced person, that, reading the several Scriptures where works are so opposed, he will be satisfied that they are not any where to be otherwise understood than of one of these four sorts.

Lxxxix. *By works when opposed to Grace or Faith, new obedience never meant.*

So that as *works* signifie sincere obedience to Christs Gospel, neither I nor those Preachers can account it any scandal to have it said of us, that we hold Justification by *works*; nor can we deserve to have it thought that we have one bit the more of a Pope in our bellies upon that account. And why any man should be more shie of acknowledging this than S. *James* was, (who saith in plain terms, *A man is justified by* works, *and not by faith onely*; and that *Abraham was justified by* works) I cannot understand. Nor need we so mince it, as to say that

XC. *No crime to hold justification by works in S. James his sence.*

faith

faith juſtifieth our *perſons*, and *works* our *faith*: for underſtanding *works*, I ſay, for a working faith, our *perſons* (if ever they be) muſt be juſtified by them. I would not that *Proteſtants* ſhould give ſuch advantage to the ſottiſh *Papiſts*, as to be ſhie of uſing any Scripture-language; and, by being ſo, to give them occaſion to think that we are in the other extreme from *them*, and have a ſlight opinion of good works. And I think it deſirable that we would ceaſe to prefer S. *Paul*'s language before S. *James* his; and not more interpret S. *James* by S. *Paul*, than S. *Paul* by S. *James*, they being both alike Apoſtles, and their Epiſtles alike Scripture; but that we would be content to interpret them by each other. And then, I dare ſay, this Controverſie would quickly be at an end among us; and we ſhould have no adverſary to contend with, about this point, but the Papiſt onely.

XCI. *S. Paul's language not to be preferred before S. James his.*

Philal.

Part I.

Philal. I am of your minde.

Theoph. But, *Philalethes*, don't you remember that you set me a method, and desired me first to discourse of those our Friends *Practices*, and next of their *Opinions*.

Philal. Yes, very well.

Theoph. And you see, how well I have observ'd it. But the best of it is, I told you then, that I would not promise you never to confound those two together; nor, indeed, could I have been as good as my word if I had: for I could not, as I ought, discourse of their Preaching, and not take in some of their Doctrine.

Par. II But I will now, in a more distinct manner, give you an account of their *Opinions*. They may be referred to matters of *Doctrine* and *Discipline*. As to the former, they profess to dissent from none that have been held to be Fundamentals of the Christian Faith, either by the *Primitive*;

I. *A more distinct account of their Opinions.*

mitive, or beſt Reformed *Modern* Churches: And heartily to ſubſcribe to the 39 Articles of our Church, taking that liberty in the interpretation of them, that is allowed by the Church her ſelf. Though it is moſt reaſonable to preſume, that ſhe requires Subſcription to them, as to an Inſtrument of Peace onely.

Part II

II. *Of their judgment in Doctrinals.*

III. *In what ſence the Church of* England *impoſeth ſubſcription to the* 39 *Articles.*

IV. *The Lord Primate of* Ireland *his teſtimony.*

Philal. So the late moſt Reverend and Learned Archbiſhop of *Armagh* ſeveral times expreſſeth the ſence of the Church of *England*, as to her requiring Subſcription to thoſe Articles. *The Church of England*, ſaith he in his *Schiſm Guarded*, p. 396. *doth not define any of theſe Queſtions as neceſſary to be believed either* neceſſitate medii, *or* neceſſitate præcepti, *which is much leſs; but onely bindeth her ſons, for peace ſake, not to oppoſe them.* And pag. 150. he doth farther thus expreſs himſelf. *We do not ſuffer any man to reject the* 39 *Articles of the Church*

Part II *Church of England at his pleasure; yet neither do we look upon them as essentials of Saving Faith, or Legacies of Christ and his Apostles; but in a mean, as pious opinions fitted for the preservation of unity: neither do we oblige any man to* believe *them, but onely not* contradict *them.*

Theoph. I thank you, *Philalethes*, for these citations out of so excellent an Author; which are no small confirmation of the truth of that assertion of mine, which did occasion them. But to go on: Those opinions in Doctrinals that those Divines look upon themselvs as most obliged to manifest their disapprobation of, and to confute, are such as either directly, or in their evident consequences, tend to beget in mens mindes unworthy thoughts of God, and unlovely notions of his nature; or to encourage profaneness, or discourage from diligence and industry

V. *What Doctrines they most endeavor to confute.*

duſtry in the ways of holineſs; as, by what hath been ſaid, you have in part underſtood. Par. II

Philal. 'Tis ſtrange to me, *Theophilus*, that any that underſtandingly believe the being of God ſhould entertain an unlovely notion of his nature; for not to have the *moſt lovely*, is to deprive him of his very Godhead. He muſt needs be as good, as good can be, and have all perfections attracting love concentred in him in the higheſt degree poſſible: He muſt be infinitely merciful, of perfectly unſpotted righteouſneſs, purity, and holineſs, (which I eſteem as no leſs lovely qualifications, than that of mercy) or he cannot be God. Nay, no man, I ſhould think, (that is not a very Atheiſt) can doubt but that all the amiable qualities that we ſee in good men, are but ſo many effluviums, if I may ſo call them, or emanations from thoſe that are in God;

VI. Philalethes *his repreſentation of Gods nature.*

Par. *II.* and therefore muſt needs be, in an unconceivably greater meaſure in *him*, where they are originally, than in *them*, where they are but derivatively. We learn from very Heathens that ſuch qualities are irradiations ſliding into mens ſouls from God, and that they proceed from a divine *afflatus*; who alſo tell us, that God is not onely ὑπλῶς, but likewiſe ἄριςος, the *beſt*, as well as chiefeſt and moſt ſupreme being. And they give a moſt lovely deſcription of Gods eſſence; and make him, you know, to be no leſs juſt and gracious, than wiſe and powerful; as, I need not tell you, may be ſhewn in a world of inſtances.

But that any *Chriſtian* ſhould be able to form to himſelf an unlovely *idæa* and conception of God, is to me matter of the greateſt aſtoniſhment; he being ſo excellently repreſented in the *New*, and alſo in the *Old* Teſtament. In the *New*, we

we finde his definition to be Love it ſelf; and that the way to be his lively images, and like to him, is not to affect to be men of great power and knowledge, but to be moſt holy and righteous, loving and merciful. In a word, the new Teſtament, I am ſure, gives the moſt amiable account imaginable of the Divine nature: And ſo doth the Old too; even when God appeared in the moſt frightful form, did he proclaim himſelf, *The Lord, the Lord God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin*: And though it follows, that he *will in no wiſe clear the guilty*, i. e. the impenitent; yet that is ſo far from being a contradiction to his goodneſs, that it is a farther declaration of it; for otherwiſe he would not have that part thereof that is called righteouſneſs. He is there repreſented, as a God *good* to *all*, and whoſe *mercies* are over *all* his works: As a God, whoſe ways Par. II

Part II are all juſt and right, and whoſe ſoul abominates all evil. It would be a very long work to go over all the places where we finde ſuch accounts of God as theſe are; and it would finde us employment, I believe, for ſome *days*.

Theoph. How dearly do I love you, *Philalethes*, for the moſt worthy conception that I perceive you have lodg'd in your ſoul, of the Divine nature! 'Tis pitie, me-thinks, that you and I are not Nameſakes: I loved you very *ſincerely* ſince my firſt knowledge of you, but now *paſſionately*. And I'le no longer account you my *Friend* onely, but you ſhall be my deareſt *Brother*, and my *Second ſelf* too, for the future.

Philal. How do you *tranſport* me, *Theophilus*, with theſe almoſt-*rapturous* expreſſions of Affection! But I cannot underſtand how I have deſerved them, by any thing I have now ſaid: doubtleſs there is no

Chri-

Christian, no, nor any *Theist* neither, but will say the same. And though I prefer *your* name before *mine own*, yet is *mine* given me for nought, if I did not *thus* speak of God; for then, to be sure, I could make no pretence to be a friend to Truth. Part II

Theoph. But you spake, what I now heard from you, with such an *impetus*, as is a *demonstration* to me, that you have a most quick and deep sense of what you said, and that you are infinitely concerned that it should be true.

Philal. But I pray, Sir, answer me; Are there any *Christians* that dare *deny* this, nay, that will not most *heartily acknowledge* it?

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, I dare not say there are; but I dare say this, That there are too too many that will speak such things of God, as most apparently contradict it.

Par. II

Philal. Would to God you had no ground for this assertion; but I know, to my frequent great trouble, that there is too good ground for it; and that some, whom I cannot but hope are sincerely good men, do with great and mighty zeal defend such Opinions as are, in my judgement, no less contrary to the goodness and holiness of Gods nature, than the thickest darkness to the cleerest light.

VII. *Consequences of Opinions not to be charged on all those that hold them.*

Theoph. We must not by any means, I am more and more convinced, charge the consequences of Opinions upon all those that hold them: for there is nothing I have a clearer perception of, than that the Notions of some, whom I verily perswade my self are pious Christians, and very true lovers of God and goodness, do immediately tend to rob God of his goodness, (in which word I imply all his Moral perfections) and to lay a foundation for im-

impiety and irreligion.

Par. II

VIII. *That they ſet themſelvs againſt the Doctrines of Gods abſolute decreeing mens ſin and miſery.*

Philal. I know the Notions you chiefly mean, are, the making of mens ſins, and conſequent miſery, the unavoidable effects of Gods *Decrees*.

Theoph. You could not well miſs of *my* meaning, nor I of *yours*; theſe Doctrines muſt needs be principally in both our thoughts: And I muſt tell you, that the Divines we are diſcourſing of do ſet themſelvs againſt both theſe in good earneſt: And they profeſs that they do ſo for no other reaſon, than becauſe they have a moſt clear ſenſe of the miſchievous effects of them.

Philal. But do all thoſe that hold that God doth abſolutely predetermine men to eternal miſery, make him abſolutely to decree mens ſins too, in order to it? I think they do not.

Theoph. No; there are many that aſſert the one, that no leſs deny the

Par. II

other: but I confeſs I do not underſtand how they can. For if men are by God unavoidably and abſolutely determined to the *end*, he muſt do more than decree, barely to *permit* the means: for they muſt neceſſarily ſin, that Gods abſolute decree may infallibly take effect; which it is poſſible it might not, if they were onely *permitted*, and not *neceſſitated* thereunto; for then mankinde might have never fallen.

IX. *That thoſe two are not to be ſeparated.*

Philal. I wonder that all ſhould not ſee this. But, *Theophilus*, why ſhould thoſe that maintain that deſperate Doctrine of Gods abſolute decreeing mens ſins, be ſo ſhie as not to acknowledge him the *author* alſo of them?

Theoph. I do not ſee that they need be ſo; and therefore there are thoſe of them that are not; and that tell us, that to boggle at acknowledging God the author of ſin, is to *fear where no fear is.*

Philal.

Philal. I would, for my part, be an *Atheist*, before I would imagine such a monstrous thing of God. Par. II

Theoph. And less you would dishonour him in being so: for as *Plutarch* saith, *I had rather posterity would say, There was never such a one as Plutarch, than that he was an unjust and vicious person*: so 'tis more dishonourable to the infinitely just and holy God, to assert that he is the author of sin, than to say that there is no God at all.

Philal. But that Doctrine, with its appendant, will (in my opinion) not onely make Him the first cause of mens being sinners, but also to set men the worst example to encourage them still in sinning: which is so horrid, that I even quake to express it.

Theoph. I guess whereabout you are, *Philalethes*: Those Doctrines make their defenders to assert, that there are two Wills in God, where-

of

Part II

of one is perfectly contrary to the other, *viz.* his Secret and Reveled will: And though he professeth kindness to all men, and saith, nay and sweareth too, that he *willeth not the death of sinners* themselvs, but had rather they would *turn from their wickedness and live*; yet, according to those Doctrines, this is but a declaration of his *Voluntas signi*; the plain English of which phrase is this; *A meer copie of his Countenance.* The like to which should one assert concerning any one of those that talk after this rate, I am sure he would take it in greatest disdain, and think himself not a little reproached.

X. *That those doctrines make their defenders assert two wills in in God, and the one contrary to the other; by which means other sad consequences also follow.*

Philal. From thence it follows too plainly also, that God giveth Laws to the generality, to the very intent that they may break them, and so aggravate their condemnation; notwithstanding that he professeth even a *passionate* desire, that men

men would obſerve them, and ſo be made happie. And by this means, moſt mens obligations to God for the many *temporal* mercies they receive from him are quite ſtruck off, and made to be no expreſſions of his goodneſs to them, but the quite contrary; whereas he tells us, (as was ſaid but now) that *he is good to all*, and that *his tender mercies are over all his works*; and that *the whole earth is full of the goodneſs of the Lord.* This is likewiſe from thence a ſequel too plain and natural, That Jeſus Chriſt is not onely *eventually*, but alſo *intentionally*, the greateſt curſe that ever befel the world; and a far greater expreſſion of the Fathers *hatred* than of his *love*, notwithſtanding that he himſelf hath ſaid, that he *came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be ſaved*: and that, *So God loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten Son,*

&c.

Part II &c. For if the forementioned Doctrines be true, our Saviours coming was to aggravate the condemnation of the generality of men (which would be far more properly called *the world*, than *a very few*) for not believing in him, who never died for them, ſo much as to put them into a poſſibility of being ſaved; though he declared that *he gave himſelf a ranſome* for the *vulgus*, or multitude of the people, (for ſo the word πολλοὶ, which is rendered *many*, doth, among the Greeks, moſt commonly ſignifie; as our Lexicons tell us, and *Vatablus* alſo upon that place) and S. *Paul* ſaith, He *gave himſelf a ranſome for* ALL, and did *taſte death for* EVERY *man*; and that he is *the Saviour of* ALL *men*, though *eſpecially of thoſe that believe*: and though he ſadly bewailed mens *not coming to him, that they might have life*; and *wept over Jeruſalem* for her obſtinate perſiſting

ing in unbelief, and moſt pathetically with tears wiſhed, *that ſhe had known, in that her day, the things that belonged unto her peace.* I could go on in inſtances of this nature, as------ Part II

Theoph. But I pray, *Philalethes*, do not: for they are grating to my ears, and moſt grievous to me. And it troubleth me to the very *ſoul*, that any (*good* people eſpecially) ſhould entertain (and much more, ſhould be zealous for) ſuch Notions as are attended with ſo long a train of moſt diſmally-ſad Conſequences, and ſo greatly reflecting diſhonour upon our infinitely-holy and good God.

Philal. I fear this kinde of diſcourſe hath put you into one of your old dumps of Melancholy; for me-thinks you all of a ſuddain look very dejectedly.

Theoph. No, *Philalethes*, there is no fear of that; but I would willingly

Part II

lingly be more concerned at any dishonour that is done to God, and his Son Jesus, than at any personal evil. Well, what was it that immediately occasioned this last talk?

Philal. The ill use that is made of that distinction of Gods Secret and Reveled will.

Theoph. You say well, it was so.

Philal. But is that distinction to be found fault with?

XI. *Of opposing Gods secret to his reveled will.*

Theoph. I see *your* memory needs rubbing up as well as *mine*. I did not at all except against that distinction, but against opposing Gods *secret* to his *reveled* will. And now I adde, that whatsoever God saith he intends, he *really* doth so; and that *his* declarations are to be understood, as we would *any* honest mans. But to deal freely with you, I should not be at all sorry, if the distinction of *voluntas signi & beneplaciti* were quite thrown out of doors.

Philal.

Philal. But what ſay you to that of Gods commanding *Abraham* to offer up his ſon *Iſaac* ? Did he intend he ſhould be offered up ? Sure no.

Theoph. Nor did God ſay he intended it ; but onely for *tryal* bade *Abraham* do it.

Philal. So it may be ſaid, that God may not, as well, really intend, that all ſhould obſerve his Laws, to whom he gives them.

Theoph. But he plainly and often declares, that he gives them for that end ; and moreover hath imprinted them in mens *ſouls*, as well as written them in his *Book* : and, as I ſaid, expreſſeth a *deſire* that men would obſerve them, and yeeld obedience to them, *i. e.* do what lies in them ſo to do. And I hope that none will ſay otherwiſe, than that it is every ones duty to believe that God would have him obey his Laws : but it was not *Abraham*'s duty to believe that

Part II that God would have him to sacrifice his son ; but onely to *do* it, except he interposed.

Philal. But it appeareth from the story, that *Abraham* did believe this.

Theoph. I grant that ; but, I say, he was not *bound* to believe it, though he did : for no man can be obliged to believe a falsity : And besides, he could have no reason to be confident that God did not intend onely to *try* him by that Command, as the event proved he did. But suppose it had fallen out otherwise, that would not at all have altered the case ; for who dares say but that God may, if he pleaseth, give commands to his servants, when he doth not intend they should do as he biddeth them, but onely to make an experiment of their readiness to obey him ? None sure will deny the use of this liberty to *any earthly* parents towards their children,

dren ; or maſters towards their ſervants. And therefore I ſay that *Abraham* had no juſt cauſe to conclude that this was not his Creators deſigne in that command ; though he took it for granted, that it was his purpoſe that he ſhould do as he bade him. Part II

Philal. What you ſay is clear enough : But did not God, by the Prophet, tell *Nineveh* that in fourty days ſhe ſhould be deſtroyed? did he mean as he ſpake then ?

Theoph. Yes doubtleſs that he did ; for there was a condition ſo plainly implied in that threatning, (*viz. If ſhe repented not*) that the *Ninevites* themſelvs were inclined, of their own accords, ſo to underſtand it. And it is ordinary among men to imply conditions in both *threatnings* and *promiſes* that ſound abſolutely, but eſpecially in threatnings; and ſo ſuch are uſually underſtood. Nay, ſome conditions are

Par. II always understood by us in the most absolute promises and threatnings that are ever uttered by the tongues of men; and must be so.

Philal. The truth is, I am but a sorry Objector.

Theoph. Your Objections have as much weight in them, I think, as any that the *Scripture* affordeth: but, I confess, some more baffling ones may be urged from seeming *Reason:* but whether we can answer them or no, we ought not, in the least, to be shaken by them, much less to be overcome. For if I may not believe any thing against which I am not able to answer all Objections; I must resolve to believe nothing at all, & to set up for a perfect Sceptick. There are Arguments invented by Wits against the certainty of evidence from Sense; which he must have a good Metaphysical pate of his own, that is able to answer; would all men therefore that han't such heads do foolish-

XII. *That we must resolve to believe nothing at all, if we may believe nothing against which we cannot answer all Objections.*

foolishly in giving undoubted credit to their own senses? I know no man that can give a satisfactory answer to an Argument that is brought against the possibility of so close an union of the particles of matter each with other, as to make a solid body; but will any man in his wits therefore doubt, whether or no there be any such thing? The Argument that is brought for the infinite divisibility of matter, hath hitherto puzzled the most acute Philosophers, and so it is like to do to the worlds end; but yet I cannot imagine that any one doth notwithstanding really believe it. And from thence, all bodies may be proved to be of a like bigness; and that a Mountain is as small as an Ant-heap, and an Ant as big as either: And this with so great a shew of reason, as I must acknowledge I cannot answer; but ought I therefore to suspect whether this be not true? Par. II.

Part II So there are ſome Metaphyſical Niceties that may ſeem to make the Opinion (and thoſe it is founded on) probable, which we laſt expreſſed our ſelvs againſt: but what of that? All we ought thence to infer is no more than this, *That Man is a weak, ſhallow creature.*

Philal. But our Adverſaries will ſay, Then you may believe *their* doctrine, for all the ſtrong Objections you think you can make againſt it; and anſwer them all with an *Oh the depth!*

Theoph. But what ſaith S. *Auſtin? Becauſe we cannot underſtand things that are* difficult, *ſhall we therefore deny thoſe that are* plain?

Philal. I wiſh that good Father had always born in his minde that Saying.

Theoph. I wiſh ſo too: But to our buſineſs: That doctrine doth as evidently contradict the natural notions God hath imprinted in the original

ginal conſtitution of humane ſouls, as can be; at leaſt to *me* it ſeems ſo to do, and ſo doth it to thouſands of others that are neither Fools nor Mad-men: and I muſt adde, that I cannot queſtion but it would to *all*, that will be but perſwaded freely to conſult thoſe innate notions: And beſides, it is expreſly againſt the whole ſtrain of Scripture from *Geneſis* to the *Revelation*.

Part II

XIII. *That the forementioned doctrine evidently contradicts our natural notions.*

Philal. But you know that there are divers *Scriptures* that ſeem to make for Gods abſolute decreeing mens *damnation*, and their *ſins* too, which are much urged.

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, if our Tranſlators had been pleaſed, they might with the alteration of but one little particle for another of the ſame ſignification, have prevented the taking *almoſt* any arguments out of Scripture to prove Gods decreeing mens *ſins*, any otherwiſe than barely to permit them. I

Par. II.

mean, if they had put [*will*] in a multitude of places, where mens ſins are foretold, in ſtead of [*ſhall*]. The [*ſhalls*] make thoſe places look as if they contained declarations of *Decrees*, whenas [*wills*] would have made it at firſt ſight to appear that they contain onely *predictions*, and expreſſions of Gods *foreknowledge* that men *would* commit ſuch and ſuch ſins, not of his *will* and *purpoſe* that they *ſhould*. I heartily wiſh that Authority would pleaſe to command the Printers to make that little alteration in their future Impreſſions of the Bible. You may ſmile at this as an odde Fancie; but I aſſure you, I am upon good grounds confident, that it would be to very good purpoſe ſo to do.

Philal. No Wiſe-man or Scholar will fetch an argument from ſuch a trifle to prove *that* or any *other* opinion.

Theoph. What of that? the generality

nerality of people are neither Scholars nor yet wise: and I have great cause to suspect, that the vulgar sort have that wretched doctrine insensibly instilled into them by the frequent reading and hearing such passages as these, *viz.* *In the later days perillous times [shall] come; men [shall] be lovers of themselvs, covetous, proud,* &c. *There [shall] be false teachers, who [shall] privily bring in damnable heresies,* &c. *And many [shall] follow their pernicious ways,* &c. And there are *innumerable* passages of this nature. But then, *Philalethes*, whatever Scriptures are brought to prove either the one or the other doctrine by, it must needs be acknowledged, that they are but very few, in comparison of those that (most *evidently* say I, but) all will confess do *seemingly* contradict them. And which is the safest course, think you, in reconciling seemingly-contrary Par. II

Part *II* places to each other? To interpret a multitude of *plain* Scriptures by a few difficult ones, or a few difficult ones by a multitude of plain ones?

XIV. *Which is the safest course in reconciling seemingly contradictory scriptures.*

Philal. The later, without all doubt. But it will be said that the Scriptures that make for those Doctrines, are as plain as those that make against them, though, as to their number, there is no comparison betwixt them.

Theoph. But I say they are more difficult, in that, their most obvious sence doth, (as none can deny) at least, *seemingly* contradict the natural notions of our souls; which the plainest sence of the other no less gratifie. But however, is it not much the better way, to understand a *few* Scriptures, in their less obvious sence, to reconcile them to the most obvious sence of a multitude of others; than to understand a multitude of Scriptures in their *least* obvious sence, to reconcile them to the

most

most obvious of, in comparison with them, extremely few? Par. II.

Philal. I have, since I suffered my self to think at all freely, been of your minde, and concluded that the Scriptures produced on the other side must necessarily be taken in another sence than *that* they fix upon; except we will make them contradict the greatest part of the Bible besides: And those that endeavour to reconcile all other to those Scriptures, make the Bible an extremely more difficult Book, than I am verily perswaded God hath made it.

XV. Theophilus *can believe no sence of Scripture that doth contradict self-evident notions.*

Theoph. For my part, I can believe no sence of any Scripture true, that plainly contradicts the self-evident notions of Good and Evil, that God hath put into my soul, and were born with me: For, (as hath been shew'd) I could have no reason to believe the Scriptures to be Gods word, no, nor yet any thing I am sure God himself saith, to be infallibly true,

were

Part II. were it not for those notions. And don't you remember that 'twas proved also, that the goodness of the Doctrine delivered is necessary to convince us, that it is of God? Mankinde hath a natural sense of Moral good and evil.

Philal. But those of the other Perswasion say, That whatsoever God doth, is just and good, because he doth it. I am sure many of them, at least, will.

XVI. *Of that opinion, That whatsoever God doth is therefore good and just because he doth it.*

Theoph. There is no other way to defend their doctrine, but to prove that: But do not those, in so saying, plainly make nothing in it self to be just or unjust, good or evil? And so, in calling God a just God, say just nothing of him, (pardon the Quibble, I designed it not) that is, no more than this, that he wills what he wills: and I wonder who does not. Thus you see, they are forced to make good and evil to depend upon arbitrary will; and so

so make the Holy God a meer Wilful Being, and his *nature* perfectly indifferent to any thing: And thence it follows, that it is consistent enough with the Divine nature, to forbid all that which by being *commanded* is now called *Holiness*, and by that means make it wickedness; and to command all that which by being forbidden is now called wickedness, and by that means make it Holiness. But if this doth not raze and overturn the foundation of all Religion, no opinion in the world tends so to do. Par. II

Philal. If *Abraham* was of that minde, he strangely forgot himself, when he said to his Maker, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do* right? And whether he was of that minde or no, if the Doctrine be true, he was guilty of a monstrously-absurd impertinence in so saying; and yet (which is more strange) he had no check for it.

Theoph.

Part II

Theoph. Nay, did not God himſelf appeal to mens innate notions, and ſo confute that doctrine, when he ſaid to the Rebellious Jews, *Are not my ways equal, and your ways unequal?* Can thoſe men think that he onely meant, *Are not* my *ways ſuch as I pleaſe to fancie, and yours ſuch as it is my pleaſure to diſlike?* Who would dare to fix ſuch an expoſtulation as that on the infinitely-wiſe God?

Philal. Well, I am clearly ſenſible, that nothing reveled by God can poſſibly contradict thoſe principles that are impreſſed in (as I think) *indelible* characters upon the ſouls of men; and therefore whatſoever places may ſeem to ſpeak mens being neceſſitated to be either ſinners, or miſerable, *muſt* be underſtood in another ſence: eſpecially ſeeing that God hath ſo often declared that mens ruine is of themſelvs, and that their help is to be found in him; and

that

that he willeth not their *death*, but the contrary; (and therefore much leſs can he will their ſins; as he hath alſo, as plainly as can be, declared:) And moreover affords them means whereby they may obtain happineſs; (which, who will not ſay that all that enjoy them are greatly beholden to God for?) and expreſſeth his grace and good will to them all without any exception. Part II

Theoph. You have put me in minde of a paſſage I have met with in a Sermon of a moſt pious and learned Divine now in heaven; which, when I read it, did greatly affect me. It is this: *Conſider impartially with your ſelvs, what an unreaſonable, horrible thing it is, ſeeing there are ſo many ſeveral frequent expreſſions of Gods general love, and gracious favour to Mankinde, inforced and ſtrengthened with ſuch proteſtations, and ſolemn oaths, that the cunningeſt Linguiſt of you*

Part II

all cannot, in your whole lives study, conceive or frame expressions more full and satisfactory. I say, is it not desperate madness, for a man to shew such hatred and abomination at the comfortable and gracious promises of God, that he can be content to spend almost his whole age in contriving and hunting after interpretations utterly contradicting and destroying the plain apparent sence of those Scriptures : And will be glad, and heartily comforted, to hear tidings of a new-found-out gloss, to pervert, and rack, and torment Gods holy Word.

Philal. Me-thinks this passage should affect any good man. But, *Theophilus*, what should induce so many to be led by a few Scriptures against such a torrent of others, to cry up such strange Doctrine ?

Theoph. You love to ask *me* Questions which you can answer as well your self : You know they pretend that

that this is the onely way to advance Gods grace in mens converſion and ſalvation. And this, no doubt, is the onely motive that prevaileth with all the truly *good* men among them to go that way. It ſounds as harſh in many, at leaſt, of *their* ears, as it doth in *ours*; as I have great reaſon to be aſſured. And *Calvin* himſelf, in the 608 page of his *Inſtitutions*, calls Abſolute Reprobation *Horribile Decretum*: And the Preſident of the Synod at *Dort* ſaid it was *materia odioſa*; and therefore declared to the Remonſtrants that that Controverſie ſhould be waved, and ſaid that they would onely hear their Arguments againſt Abſolute Election, for that was *materia ſuavis*. As I finde in their Letters called *Epiſtolæ Eccleſiaſticæ, &c.* I ſay, it is very *harſh* doctrine to many of *them* as well as to *us*; but becauſe they cannot otherwiſe than by admitting it, magnifie, as they think they

Part II

XVII. *What is the Motive inducing the good men of that perſwaſion to go that way.*

Part II they ought, the divine grace to Gods elect, they force themselvs to swallow the bitter Pill, as much as their stomacks nauseate it; and therefore, as those that drink down loathsome Potions stop their *noses*, so do these their *ears* to the clamours of their own Reason against it; and will not sedately advert to, but violently suppress the natural dictates of their understandings. Have you not several times observed that the good-natured people of that way complain more than others of Blasphemous thoughts? I am sure I have; and have found when I have discoursed with them, that this doctrine was the occasion of them. So that whether they will or no, their Reason, or innate sense of their Souls (call it which you please) suggests to them the dreadful consequences of it, which they would fain believe to be the devils temptations.

Philal. But don't you believe, that

that the men of this opinion are also induced to it, because they are not able to interpret in any other sence those places of Scripture that seem to make for it? Par. II

Theoph. I do not think that the *Learned* men are: For I cannot imagine that those should think, that such Scriptures are unintelligible in any other sence than that they understand them in, that know how *few*, and therefore how *ambiguous* the original words of the Hebrew Tongue are, as also that there are different sences of the same Verb in several Conjugations; and that there are strange Idioms and Proprieties of speech in that Language, which are also imitated in the Greek Testament; and lastly, that the occasions of several passages do frequently make another sence necessary to be imposed on them, from that which at first sight, and considering them simply and absolutely,

Part II and as entire propositions, without relation to any other thing, offereth it self.

Philal. I have sometimes thought, that those need never despair of understanding the places they produce to serve their *Hypotheses*, in a different sence from that they are so fond of, who can invent a Figure to make *All* men, nay and *every* man too, to signifie but some few; and can reconcile *I will not the death of a sinner*, with *I desire the death of most sinners*; and, *He will have all men to be SAVED*, with *He will have the generality of men to be DAMNED*; and many the like Propositions which sound in *my* ears as contradictory one to the other, as any I have ever heard or can invent. So that, *Theophilus*, it must needs be, as you said, their desire to magnifie Gods grace to the Elect, that alone prevaileth with those of them that are good-natured & truly-pious people

to

to go that way. But yet I wonder that they ſhould no more conſider, that, to magnifie Gods grace to ſome few, ſo as to deny it to all others; and ſo to advance his *mercy*, as to rob him of his *holineſs*, *truth* and *juſtice*, is to take ten thouſand times more from him, than is given thereby to him. Par. II

Theoph. I would advance Gods grace as highly as ever I am able, (and ſo I perſwade my ſelf would the Divines we have been ſpeaking of) ſo as not to deſtroy his other perfections: nor do *I* (nor I believe *they*) deſire to attribute any more to man, in the buſineſs of his ſalvation, than needs muſt, and not ſuppoſe him a perfect Brute. But to ſay the truth, I, and thoſe I am acquainted with of thoſe Divines, do magnifie in all reſpects the grace of God, as much as any of the other Way; and in one reſpect incomparably more.

Par. II

Philal. What is the way you take so to do?

XVIII. *Those Divines middle way between the Calvinists and Remonstrants.*

Theoph. A middle one betwixt the *Calvinists* and *Remonstrants*; which, in short, is this: That there is such a thing as distinguishing grace, whereby some persons are absolutely elected, by vertue whereof they shall be (having potent and infallible means prepared for them) irresistibly saved. But that others, that are not in the number of those singular and special favourites, are not at all in a desperate condition, but have sufficient means appointed for them to qualifie them for greater or less degrees of happiness, and have sufficient grace offered to them some way or other, and some time or other; and are in a capacity of salvation either greater or less through the merits of Jesus Christ; and that none of them are damned but those that wilfully refuse to co-operate with that grace of God, and will not act

act in some moral suitableness to that power they have received. And as for those that have been in an extraordinary manner wrought upon, and finde themselvs very powerfully excited and carried to that which is good; such at least have reason, so long as they are also careful to walk in all ways of holiness, to believe themselvs in the number of the Absolutely elected. *Now* (as a learned Divine saith) *the Arminian need not repine at this way, nor yet the Calvinist: for whatsoever good Arminianism pretends to concerning all men, is exhibited to the part not absolutely elected; and to the other part, the goodness of God is greater than is allotted by* Arminius: *And whatsoever good is pretended in Calvinism to that part that is absolutely elected, the same goodness is here exhibited; and besides, that direful vizard pulled off, that Ignorance and Melancholy had put upon divine* Par. II

Par. II. *providence, and the lovely face of the Gospel.*

Philal. I am glad to understand that you and they have made choice of this way; which is not new to me, (no more than another Middle way, which I cannot be satisfied with) but for some time I have been greatly inclined to prefer this before any other, as having by much the fewest and least difficulties.

Theoph. I did not think you a stranger to it, and believed you could not but like well of it; nor can I conceive why either any *Calvinist* or *Remonstrant* should mislike it. But that we see in all professions there are those that will hardly be brought to allow that there may be any farther improvements made, than those which their great Masters had attained to. Though both *Calvin* and *Arminius* were excellently-learned and pious persons, yet methinks their respective greatest Admirers

mirers ſhould acknowledge each of them ſhort of infallibility, and therefore not preſume them in any thing attained to a *Nè plus ultra*. Every Age, ſure enough, improveth in knowledge, having the help ſtill of thoſe foregoing: and as this is ſeen in other Sciences, ſo eſpecially is it diſcernible in that of Divinity; as all but ignorant, and extremely prejudiced perſons muſt needs acknowledge. Part II

Philal. But this way is not ſo new as ſome have imagined it: for I have read it in the Hiſtory of the Council of *Trent*, as that which *Catharinus*, a Moderate and Learned man, propoſed there for the accommodation of the difference between the *Dominicans* and *Franciſcans* about this point. XIX. *This way propoſed by Catharinus at the Council of Trent.*

Theoph. The ſame perſon (as I am informed by one that hath read it) hath alſo written a very ingenious Piece upon that ſubject, wherein

Par. II he layeth down, and defendeth very handſomely this very way.

Philal. But indeed, if I did not think that this way were as much elder than that Gentleman, as were our Saviour and his Apoſtles, I ſhould not have, at all, given credit to it.

Theoph. No, nor I hope any elſe, if they did not think ſo: *Id verum quod antiquiſſimum*, being in Divinity an indiſputable Maxime. And I verily believe that this way is much more befriended by the great Standard of Truth, the Scriptures, than any other. But how it ſhould, if true, have for ſome Ages the *fewest*, if *any* Friends, is no wonder: For *Truth* is too *frequently*, if not *always* loſt in a Scuffle, and forced to give place to extremes by eager conteſts. And indeed this is too moderate and yeelding a way to have ſo much as entered into the thoughts of the Hot men of either party;

XX. *How it came to paſs that this way for ſome Ages had fewest friends.*

party ; who like nothing ſo well as to keep themſelvs at the greateſt diſtance from each other. And there is great cauſe to ſuſpect, that in moſt *other* Controverſies that have been managed with that fierceneſs that this hath been, the ſeveral conteſting parties have over-done, and outſhot the mark : and that *Truth* will one day be found to have been on neither ſide, but to have layn unobſerved between the Combatants, though nearer to ſome than others. Part II

Philal. 'Tis not unlikely.

Theoph. This way, I muſt tell you, *Philalethes*, hath, for divers years, been a mighty eaſe to my minde : And I will communicate to you ſomething concerning my ſelf, that I never, before now, had occaſin to tell you. The Doctrine of Abſolute Reprobation did ever ſince I was of years of diſcretion lie very unevenly and ruggedly in my brains; and ſeemed extremely harſh to me. XXI. *This way a great eaſe to* Theophilus *his mind.*

And

Part II And though I for some time thought that I was bound to believe it ; yet could I not endure much to *think*, or to hear others *talk* of it. But after I betook my self to studie the Controversie, I had so quick a sense of the natural consequences of it, as did greatly distract me : For I was fearful of letting go the Premise, as much as the Conclusions scar'd me. But while I *thought*, or rather *feared* that the Doctrine was too too true ; I was frequently disquieted with blasphemous thoughts, and most black apprehensions of the loveliest of Beings ; nor could I think of God many times without consternation. Those thoughts I was ready to look upon as injections from *his* and *Mankindes* enemy : Till at length, after I had weighed things more impartially, (having read a Book or two that prepared me with some free Principles) I found that I had wrong'd the Devil, and that my affright-

affrighting thoughts were the too natural off-ſpring of that Principle: And came to be convinced that till I let go this, I was not like to be rid of them. But then I was as much to ſeek where to fix, and how to ſteer my ſelf, as to the doctrine of Election; (for very fearful I was to entertain any opinion that might at all leſſen Gods grace to any) whereupon for a while I was well pleaſed with that Middle way you now gave an intimation of; till after better weighing it, I found but very little, if any thing, gotten by it. Then I fell to conſidering that other I have given you an account of, and have ever ſince been as well *ſatisfied* with *this*, as I was with *that diſſatisfied*. And ſo I took my leave of the forementioned Principle, and was thereupon, I thank God, well rid of its troubleſome attendants. For ſome time I could not be perſwaded that thoſe ſad conſequences

were

Part II

were ſo faſt tyed to that opinion, but that they might be looſed from each other: whereupon I ſet my very *teeth* to the knot, and tryed all my skill to undo it; but when I found that it was labour in vain, I was, as I ſaid, chiefly encouraged by the acquaintance I took with *this* way, to ſend both Principle and Concluſions packing together; and ſo bade them all *Goodnight*.

XXII. Philalethes *no leſs beholden to it; which cauſeth* Theophilus *to ask him ſome queſtions.*

Philal. I am no leſs beholden to it than you are; nor do I think that *any* ones minde hath been more relieved by it, than *mine* hath.

Theoph. And have you not found, *Philalethes*, that ſince you exchanged the *Calviniſtical* for *this* way, you love God better than before, and can think of him with more delight and pleaſure?

Philal. Yes, I thank God; And whereas before I loved him chiefly from ſome hopes I had that he loved me; I can now love him for himſelf,

and

and the consideration of the amiableness of his nature, and essential perfections: And therefore my affection to him is more constant, than it was while it chiefly depended upon the apprehension I had of his affecting me. Part II

Theoph. So it must, I should think, needs be; although you still loved *him* onely in regard of his love to *you*: For though you may sometimes, possibly, be without any great sense of his love of *complacence*, yet I dare say you now never want that of his love of *benevolence*.

Philal. No never.

Theoph. You have also a clearer sense of the goodness of the divine precepts, and of the hatefulness and vileness of sin, han't you?

Philal. Yes, a much clearer; which I hope hath some good influence upon my life.

Theoph. So your *love* alone must needs have; but much more *that*

and

Part II and *this* together.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, what a Catechiſt are you grown all of a ſuddain? *I* pray deſiſt from putting any more Queſtions of this nature. Did *I* not ſo well know you, *I* ſhould have done but fooliſhly in thus freely anſwering thoſe you have ask'd me: And had *I* of mine own accord told you, what you have now heard, you your ſelf would have accounted me too guilty of boaſting and vain-glory. But yet though (thanks be to Gods grace) I am ſomewhat better than *I* have been; yet am *I* ſtill ſenſible of ſo much weakneſs, of ſuch great diſcompoſure of thoughts, and diſorderlineſs of affections, as may well keep me exceedingly low in mine own eyes, and Antidote me from pride and conceitedneſs in regard of my attainments, (were they greater than they are) even though *I* ſhould onely be beholden to my

own

own ſtrength for them. But ſeeing you are ſo good at Catechizing, why may not *I* be ſo alſo? Par. II

Theoph. So you have been, I think, *ſufficiently*, ſince the beginning of this diſcourſe.

Philal. But why may not I repeat to *you* your own Queſtions?

Theoph. But you have time little enough, at preſent, for other matters: don't you ſee? the Sun grows low.

Philal. Well then, to purſue more cloſely the buſineſs in hand: Do not our Adverſaries in this point accuſe thoſe Friends of ours of *Arminianiſm* in aſſerting *Free-will*, notwithſtanding that their Middle way? XXIII. *Of Free-will.*

Theoph. This way teacheth us to aſſert no *Free-will* that is oppoſite to *Free-grace*: And onely thus much, that men are inveſted by God with ability to do much in order to ſalvation; as, to abſtain from the

Part II the external acts of ſin, to hear his Word, read it and conſider it, and to *endeavour* to ſubdue all their luſts, and perform whatſoever duties are required of them, *&c.* And likewiſe by the infinitely-ſtrong motives contained in the Goſpel, by the motions of his holy Spirit, various providences, or in one word, by his preventing grace, may they *will* ſo to do. But that we can, of our ſelvs, turn our own wills from the ways of ſin to the ways of God, is peremptorily denyed by us; and, for ought that I can learn, by the *Remonſtrants* themſelvs alſo; as much as they are accuſed by ſome for ſo aſſerting.

Philal. But don't we ſee that the generality of men that enjoy the means of grace are never the better for them, but continue in wilful diſobedience?

Theoph. 'Tis too true, and matter of ſaddeſt lamentation: but what

what of that? Let us, in Gods name, charge it wholly upon themselvs; and not say, they are not able to do otherwise: if this were so, I should think it the greatest folly in the world to be angry with a wicked man. Don't we see that the threatning of an *easie* punishment, or the promise of a *small* reward, will make men finde a *will* to abstain from several sins, which they would not be kept from by all the threatnings and promises in the Book of God? Therefore, surely, by the help of these, (and especially if we take the other helps along with them, that were but now named) they may *will* not onely to *keep* from some sins, but also to *endeavour* to keep from all. Mens Wills being so seldom wrought upon, doth not prove that they have no power to will thus to do: For we see that it is the very same thing as to all other habits, as well as sinful ones: there is not

Part II

Part II one among *many*, scarcely, that will be broken of such Customs as are in themselvs very *innocent*, no, though they finde them prejudicial to them; as I need not give you instances. But then for so few mens being throughly converted by the means of grace, let us much less run to Gods absolute decreeing their non-conversion or damnation to give a Solution of it. Nor let us so wrong God, as to say that it is any way long of him, or that he hath been wanting to them; and by this means excuse them. What reason have we to imagine that they are not *themselvs* in all the fault? and that God would not have given them such a measure of grace, as would have effectually converted them, had they but acted in some suitableness to the power he hath given them? Had they but done what they *could*, and might have *willed* to have done too, but that they *freely* chose the contrary;

trary; And againſt the checks of their own Conſciences, and all the methods of Gods grace, with a *free*, not *fatal* willingneſs, preferred the pleaſing of their ſenſes before the ſalvation of their ſouls. God hath ſaid enough to perſwade us not to imagine this; as may be largely ſhewn. Par. II

Philal. I could never hear the moſt wicked wretch, when he is wiſeſt, and moſt himſelf, (I mean when on his death-bed, or under ſome ſmart affliction) either complain of God, or curſe *Adam* for his neglect of the means of grace, and unmindfulneſs of his precious ſoul: And thoſe of them whoſe conſciences are awakened do ever lay the blame on *themſelvs* principally, of their careleſneſs and diſobedience: And not at all, I ſay, either on their Creator or firſt parents; as if by the one or the other they were brought into ſo ſad a condition, as

Part II to be under an impoſſibility of ſo much as *willing* to do otherwiſe. But *then* they are heard to *befool themſelvs* exceedingly, and to make God a many fair promiſes how good they will be, if he'll but pleaſe to prolong their lives, or remove their afflictions: which is a plain Argument, that (whatſoever ſpecious ſhews of Reaſon any of them might once have pleaſed themſelvs with, for their being under a neceſſity of behaving themſelvs as they did) their own experience, and inward ſenſe of their ſouls undoubtedly aſſures them, now that they have leiſure ſedately to conſult them, that they are much freer creatures than they were once willing to fancy themſelvs to be.

Theoph. That one Argument would ſatisfie me, more than the moſt *plauſible* ones I ever met with of the other ſide.

Philal. But we ſee, *Theophilus*, whi-

whither too many of *thoſe* are carried, that deny all freedom of will in unregenerate men, as to that which is good: for, I think I may ſay, that even *all* thoſe that beſt underſtand themſelvs in that way, do alſo oppoſe this Liberty as to all the actions of all men: wherein they are not a little beholden to Mr. *Hobbs*, as hard an opinion as too deſervedly they have of him. Part *II*

Theoph. But the Philoſophical ſubtilties whereby that Gentleman and his Brethren in this point, have defended that opinion, may be abundantly confuted by the contrary and confeſſed ſenſe of almoſt all Mankinde, and by the knowledge we have of our own ſouls. For we are able at any time to make an experiment to our ſelvs, that there is an αὐτοκίνησις or ſelf-moving principle in our Wills, and that they are not blinde powers neceſſarily following the dictates of our Underſtandings;

Part II (the Will being doubtless no really-distinct faculty from the Understanding, nor from the *Soul* neither; but the Soul it self, as it simply *understands* or *apprehends* an object under the notion of true or good, or as by comparing one with another it *judgeth* of them, is called the *Understanding*; and as it *putteth* it self forward towards the doing or having any thing, or *refuseth* so to do, it is called the *Will*). For we finde that we are able to will to do what we know ought not to be done, and to omit what we are assured we ought to do: I say, we finde this by sad experience; and therefore when we do thus, our Wills contradict and disobey the dictates of our Understandings. And if this were not so, (let those men say what they can) there could be no such thing as a sin against Conscience.

Philal. Our own Feeling and Sensation is a thousand times more

convincing than any Argument can possibly be that is onely founded in Speculation. Par. II

Theoph. Yes verily. But whereas I said, that this strange opinion is against the sense of *almost* all Mankinde; I think I spake too modestly, and might have spared that[*almost*]. For I cannot imagine that those men themselvs, that are the greatest Zealots for the Doctrine of mens Wills being under a fatal necessity, either by the means of Gods Decrees, or upon any other account;(I say, I cannot imagine that) they really believe it themselvs, except in some certain Fits; as confidently as they may talk or write (I will not say to shew their parts,but) to manage a disputation. For they will as much befool and vex at themselvs when they are sensible they have done amiss, as other folk. But how a mans Conscience, or the reflecting of his practical Understanding upon his acti-

Par. II. ons ſhould trouble him, ſo as to make him condemn himſelf; I cannot by any means underſtand, if he be not at the ſame time conſcious to himſelf, that he might have done otherwiſe.

Philal. None are more angry with *others* neither, than *they* uſe to be, and that not onely upon the account of actions, but alſo of opinions: there are none in the world more impatient towards thoſe that are not of their minde than I perceive the violent men of that way are: Nay, they will be ready to call you *Heretick* if you don't think as they do in *Philoſophy*, as well as in *Divinity*.

Theoph. But there is nothing in the world more certain, than that if all mens actions and opinions be the neceſſary reſult of an irreſiſtible Fate, they may onely pitie Naughty men, and poor Hereticks; it would be the moſt unaccountable folly to be

be angry with them. And though they are never so willingly so, this can make them the objects of onely so much the greater pitie; seeing, according to their doctrine, they cannot but will so to be. And he therefore that shall storm against you and me, for talking against this Doctrine, will in so doing take our parts, and declare himself to be of our minde. Part II

XXIV. *Of the state of the Heathens.*

Philal. But we have all this while, *Theophilus*, been discoursing onely of such as enjoy the means of grace; but what say you to the Heathens, that never heard of Christ, or saw one letter of the Bible? Are not they under a fatal necessity of being damned? And is not God wanting to them, think you?

Theoph. To say the truth, many of them, for all their not having heard of Christ, and their being strangers to the Bible, have out-done most *Christians*, to our great shame be

Par. II be it ſpoken. But, I ſay, that God is not nor hath not been wanting to them neither, as to the enabling them to do ſo much, as he expects from them; and ſo making them capable of ſome lower degrees of happineſs. Hath not our Saviour told us, that *where little is given, but little ſhall be required?* And I have heard of a meer Natural Fool, that on his death-bed ſaid, *Lord, where thou giveſt but little, thou doſt not expect much.* God hath given the meaneſt of them a ſenſe of good and evil in divers inſtances, and that he is willing to aſſiſt them with his grace to live accordingly; as alſo that he ſometimes excites their Wills, who dares deny? Hath not S. *Paul* told us, that they are *without excuſe*, or *rendered inexcuſable*? but how can they be ſo, if they are denyed what is, at leaſt, ſo far neceſſary as was now ſaid? But, *Philalethes*, we need not trouble

our

our ſelvs about them ; we ſhall, no queſtion, at the great day (if we can but have patience to wait till then) clearly underſtand the infinite juſtice of God Almighty's proceedings with them ; and that thoſe of them, that ſhall then have the ſentence of condemnation paſt upon them, will accuſe themſelvs moſtly, and not at all their Maker for it. For my part, I will not ſay that they are any of them ſaved ; but I would not for a world, neither, pronounce them all damned. I know that *there is no name under heaven whereby men can be ſaved, but onely the name of Jeſus Chriſt* ; but I am nowhere told, that thoſe which never heard of him cannot be ſaved by him, without faith in him. If this be ſo, what becomes of poor Infants ? nay, of all thoſe, except a Prophet or two, that lived before the coming of our Saviour ? He ſhall be my great *Apollo*, that can give

Part *II* give me sufficient reason to believe that any under the Law, except some few extraordinary persons, had faith in Christs death for the remission of their sins; whenas his own Disciples had not, till after his Resurrection: but yet eleven of them will be acknowledged to have been good men before his death. Nay, it is evident, that till after his Resurrection, they retained too gross a notion of the Messiah. So that, I say, if any of the Heathens be saved (which if they are not, it will be their own faults) it may be time enough to understand their obligation to Christ for it, when they are come into the other world. But why should we *Christians* be less charitable toward them, than were the very Jews? who admitted those that observed the seven Precepts of *Noah*, and worshipt the true God, (who were called *Proselytes of the gate*) to the hope of eternal life.

And

And the saying of *Trypho* the Jew to *Justin Martyr* is very observable. *If thou hadst continued a Heathen Philosopher*, said he, *and lived unblamably, there would have been hope of thee: but seeing thou leavest God, to believe in a Man, what hope can there be of thy salvation?* Par. II

So that if I were bound to give my sense of the honestest of the Heathens, I would chuse to judge on the right hand: but we have nothing to do with them; nor can any Argument drawn from the consideration of their circumstances, establish the doctrine against which we have so freely expressed our selvs.

Philal. From that little you have said of them, it plainly enough appeareth. But besides, there are some, you know, that are of opinion that those who have been in the worst circumstances in this state, and enjoyed the least means, may continue in a state of probation for some

Part II

ſome time betwixt their departure hence and the day of Judgement, and have better means then afforded them.

Theoph. Whether that will be ſo or no, God onely knows: But *this*, me-thinks, ſhould be by all granted, that the infinitely-wiſe God hath ways enough, though never ſo much unknown to us, to clear his Juſtice and Goodneſs, in his dealing with the whole world; though the Doctrine ſome are ſo fond of, and we no leſs diſlike, ſhould have no truth in it: And that he may have moſt wiſe holy and good ends in thoſe diſpenſations that ſeem moſt harſh to us; which we cannot ſo much as dream of. Nor is it fit for us to deſire that unſearchable wiſdom it ſelf ſhould make us acquainted with the reaſons of all his actings; or level his Providences with our moſt ſhallow capacities, and gratifie our licouriſh curi-

XXV. *That God hath ways, though they may be perfectly unknown to us, to clear the juſtice & goodneſs of his dealings with all mankind.*

curiosity in all our enquiries. We may well be abundantly satisfied with this, That God is perfectly holy, wise, and good; and that he cannot do any thing disbecoming or unworthy of those attributes. And therefore as desirous as I am to defend, according to my weak ability, what the Almighty hath declared concerning himself in the plainest manner that words can express, from the attempts of those, that I think in my conscience do take a course (as well as they may mean) to render it insignificant, and to vindicate him from those notions that most evidently tend to eclipse those perfections which he most desireth to be known by: yet I altogether dislike prying into those matters that he hath kept secret, and affecting to be wise above what is written. Part II

Philal. If all men were of that minde, the Controversie in hand would be soon ended. But, *Theophilus*,

Par. II

philus, there are those that say, that what we are forced to acknowledge to defend our Middle way, tendeth to encourage men in Security, and to defer the great work of Repentance to the very last: For that it from thence followeth, that it is in mens power, when they please to have a minde to it, to put themselvs into the number of Gods faithful and elect people.

XXVI. *Whether what must be acknowledged, to defend that middle way, tends to encourage security, &c.*

Theoph. We most heartily abominate that consequence; nor can any doctrine of ours be at all charged with it. For we say that men may sin away their day of grace, even before that of their lives be expired. And by their often grieving Gods holy Spirit, and quenching his blessed motions, they may cause him quite to leave them, and give them over to the hardness of their own hearts. And let me speak to the man, that is hereby inclined to be more secure, in the words of the

the excellent perſon, a paſſage in whoſe Sermon I before quoted, and which preſently follow it. *Thou wretched Fool! dareſt thou make an advantage of Gods goodneſs to aſſiſt and patronize thy ſecurity? Hath he promiſed to give thee Repentance, whenſoever thou pleaſeſt to allow thy ſelf leiſure to ſeek it? No, know, there is a time, (and preſuming ſecurity doth haſten and add wings to that time) when there ſhall be found no place for Repentance,* &c. Par. II

Philal. I wiſh you could as eaſily vindicate the contrary doctrine from tending to make men ſecure and careleſs.

Theoph. I wiſh I could, but for my *life* I cannot: And I am ſure it doth a world of miſchief. Many whom I hope are good people would be better, I verily think, were it not for that doctrine: But I am certain that multitudes of wicked wretches

XXVII. *That the Doctrine diſcourſed against doth a world of miſchief.*

Part II are greatly hardened in their ſins by it; and will not endure to be told that it is not true, that they may not be deprived of the main prop of their ſecurity. They will ſneer in the faces of their pious Miniſters, when they pathetically excite them to work out their own ſalvation; and flatter themſelvs with this, that whatere the Preacher is pleaſed to ſay, there is no neceſſity of any ſuch ſtrictneſs and diligence, or of any at all: for their fate is determined; and that though holineſs be neceſſary to happineſs, yet if they are abſolutely deſigned for happineſs, God will ſure enough, at one time or other make them holy; but if not, let them do what they can, he will not. And who can anſwer this? Were there no other miſchief attending the doctrine than this, it would make one conclude it falſe. And would it not vex one to the very ſoul, to be liable to be baffled by every ſorry Raſcal;

and

and that too in a busines of infinitely the most weighty importance? Part II

Philal. I see you have some hot bloud in you, and can for a need be very heartily angry. One would think all the veins in your body to have emptied themselvs into your face.

Theoph. Say you so? I must confess I can never think of this Mischief, but I am apt to be much moved: and to say the truth, I give my self leave to be angry upon such accounts; I wish that no much slighter occasions could ever make me so, and then of all my sins, I should least bewail that of Passion. Well, *Philalethes*, I am sure that our doctrine is a mighty incentive to holiness, and the other a no less obstacle; as many as there are whose true goodness doth antidote them against the poison of it. And this is the great Test and Standard, whereby I examine points of Controversie; I consider

Part II

XXVIII. *The Teſt by which* Theophilus *examines controverted points.*

which of the oppoſites tends moſt to the advancement of real holineſs, (which I have more than once had occaſion to tell you, is the great deſigne of the Chriſtian Religion) and *that* I think my ſelf bound to prefer, which I finde doth this: but that which apparently tends to make men careleſs in their proſecutions of it, I account my ſelf obliged to reject as falſe, as great ſhews as it may have of probability. Nor is it any thing in the world, but the clear ſenſe I have that this doctrine doth ſo, as alſo that it, with its unavoidable conſequents, ſhamefully miſrepreſents our bleſſed Creator and Redeemer, that makes me oppoſe it, as I ſometimes do, and conclude it to be erroneous.

Philal. But you likewiſe reject it becauſe it contradicts (as was ſaid) ſuch an innumerable company of Scriptures?

Theoph. The forementioned conſidera-

siderations make me interpret *those few* Scriptures that seem to make for it, by *these many*; and not these many, by those few. Par. II

Philal. I believe this doctrine would quickly be exploded by all good men, if they could once be perſwaded to think that the Ninth to the *Romans* is capable of another Expoſition than that which is commonly given to it: For I know no other Scriptures urged for it, but may be anſwered with eaſe enough.

Theoph. Though I will not ſay, that it is eaſie to give the true ſenſe of every verſe in that Chapter, any more than it is in many others of S. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, (whoſe ſtyle is often the moſt obſcure I ever read, the connexions in many places being not to be found without extreme difficulty; which is occaſioned, I think, chiefly by his many tacite Anſwers to Objections, and Queſtions made to him by thoſe to whom he wrote, XXIX. *Of the great obſcurity of S. Paul's ſtyle in many places; and the cauſes of it.*

Par. II which we are unacquainted with; as alſo having a very curt and ſhort way of expreſſing himſelf, (obſerving very much in the Greek Tongue the *Hebrew* way of ſpeaking) and beſides, making ſo many excurſions as he doth, and very long Parentheſes; upon which accounts, if not more, no Apoſtle hath been ſo miſunderſtood as he; and, if you obſerve it, you ſhall finde that they are S. *Paul's* Epiſtles out of which almoſt all our wilde opinions have principally had their original, through the ignorance of men, or what is worſe. The Apoſtle S. *Peter* obſerveth, that even in *his* days, (when they were much more eaſily intelligible than now they are) there were ſome things in them *hard to be underſtood, which thoſe that were unlearned and unſtable wreſted (as they did the other Scriptures alſo) to their own deſtruction*). I ſay therefore, though it may not be eaſie to give

give the true ſence of every verſe in that Ninth to the *Romans* ; yet I count it far leſs difficult to vindicate it from patronizing Abſolute Reprobation, than to prove it doth ſo. Par. II

Philal. If it be not too great a trouble, I could wiſh that you would run it over with a brief Paraphraſe.

Theoph. That I need not do, nor above half that Chapter ; there being but about ſo much of it that ſignifieth any thing towards the countenancing of that opinion : And ſo far I will comply with your deſire.

XXX. *A Paraphraſe upon ſeveral verſes in the Ninth to the* Romans.

The Apoſtle having in the five firſt verſes expreſſed his great ſorrow for his Country-men the Jews, in that by their killing the Meſſiah, and moſt obſtinate perſiſting in unbelief, they had provoked God to reſolve upon the caſting off and rejecting their Nation in general, that is, to put them into the ſame circumſtances with the reſt of the world, and in ſome reſpects into worſe, *viz.* to

Part II

deprive them of their good land, and even to cause them to cease to be a Nation or Body Politick, but to be dispersed here and there up and down the world; and therefore necessarily deprived of the extraordinary advantages for their souls they had an enjoyment of, which are there summed up, together with not a few temporal ones; they having been a people owned by God above all other, and his most special Favourites: I say, having done this in the five first verses, it followeth

In the 6. *Not as though the Word of God had taken none effect; for they are not all Israel that are of Israel.*

In which words he answers an Objection they might make against the possibility of Gods rejecting them, *viz.* If this be so, how can the promise of God to *Abraham* concerning his seed be performed? And he replieth, *They are not all Israel that*

that are of Israel ; i. e. God hath reserved to himself a liberty of determining at several times, according to his pleasure, who shall be esteemed that seed of *Abraham* to whom the promise belongeth, and therefore he may restrain it to those that were never the seed of his loyns, but of his faith onely. And he sheweth next that this liberty God did use immediately after the promise : for, saith he in

V. 7. *Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called :* i. e. Those which came from *Abrahams* loyns were not *all* accounted those sons of *Abraham* that should have a share in the promise, but *those* onely which he should have by *Isaac*. And he saith in

V. 8. *That is, they which are the children of the* flesh, *these are not the children of God, but the children of the* promise *are accounted for the seed.*

Part II *seed.* i.e. They that descended from *Abraham* by carnal generation were not all heirs of the promised Blessing; but onely those children he had by vertue of the promise were accounted for the seed that should so be. Then it followeth,

V. 9. *For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.* i.e. The birth of *Isaac* was a special effect of Gods promise; he being miraculously born of a naturally-barren woman, and according to the ordinary course of nature past childbearing, had she been never so fruitful; and his father being a very old man. Then saith he,

V. 10, 11, 12. *And not onely this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac (for the children being yet unborn, nor having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her,*

The

The elder ſhall ſerve the younger. i.e. Neither did God at one time onely declare, that he reſerved to himſelf liberty to diſtinguiſh between the ſons of *Abraham*, as to their enjoyment of the promiſed inheritance, and other extraordinary priviledges; but he declared it again concerning the ſons of *Iſaac*: For before the birth of the Twins which he had by *Rebecca*, and therefore when neither had done good or evil, whereby there ſhould be any difference made between them, it was reveled by God to her, that her elder ſon, that is, the people that ſhould be born of him, ſhould ſerve the younger, or the Nations that ſhould deſcend from him This I ſay, becauſe *Eſau* in his own perſon did never ſerve *Jacob*. And this appeareth farther, in that God told *Rebecca* at the ſame time, that *two NATIONS were in her womb*. So that God declared to *Rebecca*, that he intended Par. II

to

Part II to restrain the promise made to *Abraham* to the seed of *Jacob* onely; and that they alone were chosen by him to inherit the good land, together with its appendages. And this priviledge, he tells them here, they had not upon the account of any foreseen desert of theirs, but onely of *his* free goodness that *called* or *designed* them thereunto. Then he thus proceedeth,

V. 13. *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.* This is a quotation out of *Malachi* 1. 2, 3. where *Esau*'s person was not spoken of; but by *Esau*, his posterity the *Edomites* are understood; as you will see, if you consult the place. Some conceive, that whereas God saith by the Prophet that he hated *Esau* or the *Edomites*, he meant no more than that he less loved them than the *Israelites*, or was not so kinde to *them*, as he was to *these*; in that whereas he gave

Jacob

Jacob or the *Iſraelites* a land flowing with milk and honey, the portion of *Eſau* or the *Edomites* was the ſtony and barren mountains of *Seir*. And it is certain that ſo the word that ſignifieth *to hate* is in many places to be underſtood. As *Gen.* 29.31. *Jacob* is ſaid to *hate Leah*; i.e. he loved *Rachel* better, as appeareth by the foregoing verſe. In *Luke* 14. 26. we are required to *hate our father and mother*, &c. and *John* 12.25. to *hate our lives*. But nobody underſtands by *hating* theſe, any more than not loving them ſo well as Chriſt. But however, I conceive that by *hating* in this chapter of *Malachi*, is to be underſtood very ſeverely puniſhing: and indeed, the words following make this evident. And obſerve that the Apoſtle doth here onely allude to theſe words of the Prophet: nor doth he ſay, that *before the children had done either good or evil*, God ſaid, *Jacob have I loved*,

Par. II *I loved, and Eſau have I hated*; but onely, *The elder ſhall ſerve the younger.* But as for that ſaying, *Eſau have I hated*, it was after their wicked and moſt unnatural behaviour towards their brethren the *Iſraelites*, and alſo upon that account; as you will ſee, if you compare this place with the Prophecie of *Obadiah*; where, in verſ. 10. it is ſaid, *For thy violence againſt thy brother Jacob ſhame ſhall cover thee, and thou ſhalt be cut off for ever*: And in the next verſes, we ſee what the violence they are charged with was. I confeſs I do not know but that I am ſingular in this Expoſition; but it is ſo very evident, that I ſhould wonder if ſeveral Expoſitors ſhould not have hit upon it. Now then the Apoſtle ſaith,

V. 14. *Is there unrighteouſneſs with God? God forbid.* i. e. Will God be unjuſt in caſting off the ſeed of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, which

which ſtrictly obſerve the Law given them by *Moſes*, and making thoſe of the Gentiles his ſpecial favourites in their ſtead, that believe his Revelation made by Chriſt and his Apoſtles? No ſurely, we cannot accuſe him of injuſtice if he doth ſo; for it is but agreeable to his own words to *Moſes*. Part II

V. 15. *For he ſaith to Moſes, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion.* i. e. I will beſtow my kindneſs where I pleaſe, without giving account thereof to any one. And therefore God may juſtly accept Gentiles to his ſpecial favour, as idolatrous and wicked as generally they are, (for he is not obliged to damn all that deſerve it) and caſt off his ancient people the Jews at his pleaſure, as ſtrict obſervers as they are of one Law, they being diſobedient to another. Then he thus proceeds:

V. 16.

Par. II.

V. 16. *So then it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy.* i. e. From thence it is evident, that this mercy and favour of God is not the deſert or prerogative of thoſe that with great zeal aſpire to it, but in a wrong way, *viz.* by the *Moſaical* performances; as the Jews do, (this you will ſee is very clear by v. 31, 32.) but to be had from the free grace and mercy of God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. Then in the verſe following the Apoſtle proceeds to ſhew that God had reſerved liberty to himſelf, not onely in beſtowing benefits on whom, and on what conditions he pleaſeth; but alſo in inflicting puniſhments, and ſo caſting off the Jews, notwithſtanding their zeal for the Law of *Moſes*: for this he tells them God had given them a plain teſtimony, concerning his dealing in the like caſe, *viz.* ſhewing his ſeverity againſt obſti-

nate

nate ſinners, as the Jews were in re- Part II
jecting Chriſt and his bleſſed Go-
ſpel. And inſtanceth in that of *Pharaoh*;

V. 17. *For the Scripture ſaith unto Pharaoh, For this ſame purpoſe have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my power in thee, and that my Name might be declared throughout all the earth.* i. e. *Pharaoh* having long hardened his own heart, notwithſtanding the ſeveral warnings he had by *Moſes*, and no fewer than ſix Judgements inflicted upon him; God at length ſaith concerning him, that he would harden his heart in his juſt judgement, *i. e.* do that which he would be farther hardened by: and addes, that he would preſently cut him off, but that he preſerved him, and raiſed him out of great dangers, for no other end, but to make him an example of his juſt indignation againſt obdurate and ſtubborn Rebels, in

Par. II

the more ſignal and illuſtrious manner. That the word ἐξήγειρα, which is tranſlated [*I have raiſed thee up*] is to be underſtood as was now ſaid, is apparent, in that it ſignifieth to raiſe out of ſome low condition, and often from ſome diſeaſe or danger, as a very learned Critick hath obſerved. Particularly, *James* 5. 15. it is uſed to ſignifie raiſing out of a diſeaſe. And farther, this appears from the Hebrew word that is uſed *Exod.*9. 16. which is the very place that is here cited by the Apoſtle: the word there is העמדתיך, and it ſignifieth *Stare feci*, *I have made thee ſtand.* The Vulgar Latine renders it, *Suſtentavi te*, *I have ſuſtained thee.* The Septuagint, διετηρήθης, *Thou wert kept*, or *kept alive.* It followeth,

V. 18. *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* i. e. From hence I conclude, that God may

may without the leaſt injuſtice, have mercy at his pleaſure, on ſome wicked perſons that have deſerved the contrary; and harden others. Par. II.

By Gods hardening in Scripture, we are not to underſtand any poſitive action of his, whereby he putteth wickedneſs into men, or intends and increaſeth that which is already in them; for then would he be the author of ſin; which to aſſert is the higheſt blaſphemy. Neither have we any cauſe to believe that it is to be underſtood of Gods withdrawing all manner of neceſſary helps whereby ſinners may be mollified. For the Signes that were wrought upon *Pharaoh*, were in themſelvs very proper to ſoften him; and moſt of them, while they continued, had that effect: but Gods ſtill removing of them, ſeems to be the great cauſe of his induration; as among others is obſerved by *Origen*. And I remember he ſaith, that it is uſual for fa- XXXI. *How God is ſaid to harden ſinners.*

Par. II fathers to ſpeak after this manner to their diſobedient children : *'Tis I have hardened you, 'tis I that have made a Rogue of you : for had not I been ſo indulgent towards you, you would not behave your ſelf as you do towards me.* So that by Gods hardning, we are to underſtand no more than his doing ſuch things to wicked men, which are not in their own nature, but accidentally, through their wickedneſs, the occaſion of their farther hardening. And ſo, and no otherwiſe, did he harden the Jews ; nay, *chiefly* were they hardened by the divine *forbearance* to puniſh them for their rebellion and unbelief ; by which means moſt of them came to be, through their own naughtineſs, more and more obſtinate ; and ſo rendred themſelvs the more fit objects of that vengeance that forty years after our Saviours death, according to his prediction, brake forth upon them. That notwith-

withſtanding this induration, each particular perſon of them was not in an abſolutely hopeleſs condition as to their eternal ſtate, appeareth in that many of them were converted to the faith by the Apoſtles preaching; though it is certain, that the rejection of them, conſidered as a *Nation*, was inevitable; and the decree concerning their being deprived of thoſe priviledges, whereby they were for a long time diſtinguiſhed from other people, irreverſible. In the next words a reply of the perverſe Jews is brought in, to what the Apoſtle had ſaid to them in thoſe foregoing; which, 'tis like, they had ſometime made upon the like occaſion. Part II

V. 19. *Thou wilt ſay then unto me, Why doth he yet finde fault? for who hath reſiſted his will?* i.e. Why doth he ſtill accuſe us for, and upbraid us with not believing in your Jeſus; when he hath (as it ſeemeth

Part II from what thou haſt ſaid) hardened us, and is reſolved to reject us? for his counſel ſhall ſtand; who hath ever reſiſted his decree? though we ſhould now believe the Goſpel, it will be to no purpoſe. Nay, now he would not have us believe it, that his decree concerning us may take effect. To this he anſwers,

V. 20. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God? ſhall the thing formed ſay unto him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me thus?* i. e. Nay but, O man, who art thou, that thou dareſt tax the wiſdom of God, upon the account of his ſo doing, as if he could do fooliſhly? (And as for his dealing in ſuch a manner with you, as that you become by that means more hardned, and averſe to obey his Goſpel; you may thank your ſelvs for it, and therefore have no cauſe to object againſt Gods *juſtice* neither: and beſides, 'tis onely long of your

own

own wickedneſs that you become more hardned by any of his providences). For you therefore to talk after this rate, is as arrogant, as if the thing formed ſhould ſay to him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me after this faſhion ? Par. II

V. 21. *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make one veſſel to honour, and another to diſhonour ?* i. e. If you think that God hath dealt unjuſtly with you, I pray anſwer me this Queſtion : Hath not the Potter power over his clay, to make of it what veſſel he thinks good ? And when a piece thereof is marred upon the wheel, to make a meaner veſſel of it than otherwiſe it might have been ? and ſhall not your Creator have as much power to deal with you as he pleaſeth, and (if he thinks good) to harden ſome of you, when he converts others ; ſeeing you have rendered your ſelvs as liable to his

Part II wrath, as is the clay to the Potters pleaſure? By *Jeremiah* 18.4,5,6, and the following verſes, will this Expoſition be made very plain and clear: to which place the Apoſtle, in theſe words, doth very probably allude; and you will by thoſe verſes underſtand, that the onely uſe God himſelf makes of this ſimilitude, is the very ſame with that which you now heard. Then he goes on thus:

V. 22 23 *What if God, willing to ſhew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured* (or *will endure*; here being, 'tis like, an Analage of the Tenſe) *with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction; and that he might* (or *that it may pleaſe him to*) *make known the riches of his glory, on the veſſels of mercy which he hath before prepared unto glory?* i. e. What if God doth not preſently puniſh you according to your deſert, but goeth

goeth on for ſome time to bear with you, and, while he doth ſo, findes fault with you for your unbelief? What if he doth not immediately deſtroy thoſe that have long provoked him to it, and by their continued Rebellions made themſelves moſt worthy and fit objects of his wrath; but is pleaſed ſtill, with great gentleneſs and patience, to bear with them (as he did with *Pharaoh*) to chide and threaten them (as he alſo did him) that ſo he may the more ſeverely proceed againſt thoſe, that ſhall be more hardned by his forbearance, and continue refractory notwithſtanding his threats, and puniſh them in the more exemplary manner, (as he did that wicked King) I pray what ſhew of injuſtice is in this? But much leſs can God be taxed with unrighteouſneſs in having mercy on ſome as ill-deſerving Jews, and even wicked Gentiles

Part II

tiles (ſee the next verſe) by preparing them by a true and effectual faith in Chriſt for eternal bleſſedneſs, to demonſtrate, in the moſt ſignal manner, the riches of his grace and goodneſs.

Obſerve, that *the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction*, are ſuch as the Apoſtle ſaith God *endured with much long-ſuffering*; and therefore they were not made ſo by any abſolute Decree of his, but made themſelvs ſo by their wilful and free ſinning: For what *long-ſuffering* can it be, to bear with the ſins of thoſe that could never have poſſibly been avoided?

Philal. That verſe alone is enough to warrant the truth of the Paraphraſe you have given of thoſe foregoing, at leaſt as to the ſubſtance of it.

Theoph. But, *Philalethes*, thoſe that would have the Apoſtle to deſigne in thoſe verſes the proving of the

the doctrine of Abſolute Reproba- Par. II
tion, and the juſtice of it; how be-
ſides the purpoſe do they make him
in this verſe to conclude that diſ-
courſe?

Philal. It would have been a thouſand times more pertinent to ſuch a deſigne, for him thus to ſay: *What if God willing to declare his* Soveraignty, *was pleaſed from Eternity to determine concerning you, that you ſhould be unavoidably damned, and to make you for that very end, notwithſtanding all the means of grace he hath afforded to you; which of you dares therefore to ſay or think that he is too hardly dealt with, or can complain upon that account?*

Theoph. Ay well ſaid, this would be to the purpoſe with a witneſs: but thanks be to God, there's no ſuch talk as this in all the Bible.

Philal.

Part II

XXXII. Philalethes *offereth another interpretation of the 19 & 20 verses.*

Philal. But give me leave to offer to you another interpretation of the 19 and 20 verses: *Why doth he yet finde fault, for who hath resisted his will?* i. e. Why doth he *now* finde fault, (ἔτι may be so rendered, for it signifieth *jam* as well as *adhuc*) for who hath disobeyed his Law? Why is he so angry with us, and resolved so severely to punish us? for we are so far from refusing obedience to his Law, that it is onely our zeal for that, which makes us reject your Christian Religion.

Then saith the Apostle, *Nay but, O man, who art thou that replyest against God? Shall the thing formed?* &c. i. e. You may be ashamed of that sawcie and profane answer: for may not God your Creator impose what Laws he pleaseth on you? is he bound never to abrogate the Law given by *Moses* to you,

you, and to require your obedience to no other? And then it followeth, *Hath not the potter power over the clay?* &c. And therefore why may not God, for your obstinate disobedience to his Son Jesus, as zealous as you are for the Law of *Moses*, of a glorious Nation dignified with extraordinary priviledges, make a base and contemptible people of you; and continuing in unbelief, make your condition far worse too in the other world; as well as the Potter, when he findes a piece of clay untractable, so that it will not be made a fine vessel, doth make a courser, and one for a mean use, of it? Part II

Theoph. This Exposition of yours is ingenious, and for ought I know the truest; if either there can be found a good connexion between the 22 verse, and those so interpreted; or the 22 verse be related not so

Par. *II.* ſo much to theſe, as to the 18 verſe.

Philal. But whatſoever meaning the Apoſtle had in ſome verſes of this Chapter, the oftener I read it, the more am I convinced, that there is not a ſyllable of any ſuch Doctrine as that you have been diſproving to be found there: and that he ſaith nothing to prove either *Eſau* or his poſterity to be put into a deſperate condition, by Gods decrees, concerning their eternal ſtate; but onely that the ſeed of *Jacob* were diſtinguiſhed from that of *Eſau* by the enjoyment of far greater priviledges in this world. Nor that he aſſerts any other Reprobation of the Jews, than that which their wilful rejection of the Meſſiah, and his Goſpel, was the cauſe of.

Theoph. No, nor yet, as I ſaid, doth the Apoſtle ſay, that they were

were in a hopeleſs condition as to their eternal ſalvation, notwithſtanding their unbelief; but onely that upon this account God had paſſed an irreverſible Decree for the rejection of them conſidered as a *Nation*. For the *converſion* of any particular perſons among them, is not aſſerted to be abſolutely impoſſible; but all that may be proved from any of his words is, that Gods purpoſe to caſt them off ſo far as that they ſhould be no more a diſtinct *Nation* or Body Politick, was unchangeable. Par. II

Philal. I have been often told that the moſt ancient Fathers were not ſo Eagle-eyed as to eſpie that doctrine either in this Chapter, nor yet elſewhere.

Theoph. Several, nay *moſt* of them, moſt plainly, I aſſure you, contradict it in their Writings in the plaineſt expreſſions; as I am pre-

Part II

prepared to shew you at large, whensoever you shall please to desire me. And this is so true, that you know they are suspected by many of that Doctrine which was since their days called *Pelagianism*, though without sufficient ground; if at least the *Pelagian* Doctrine were what it is now commonly represented to be; but it is not certainly known what it was.

XXXIII. *That the most ancient Fathers were enemies to absolute Reprobation, with its concomitants.*

Philal. This alone is *almost* a *demonstration* to me, that the Apostles never preacht this Doctrine: For those Fathers living so near their days, 'tis not easily conceivable how they should so unanimously concur in mistaking their sence, *they* being in far better circumstances to understand it, than *we* that are at such a distance from them.

Theoph.

Theoph. But how is it imaginable then, that they ſhould run ſo ſoon from one Extreme to another, as they muſt have done, if the fore-mentioned ſuſpicion of ſome be true. But however, I can by no means underſtand how it ſhould come to paſs, that thoſe Fathers of the Church that almoſt immediately ſucceeded the Apoſtles, ſhould in ſuch a point as this, (which is pretended to be ſo clearly revealed) depart from them. *Juſtin Martyr* wrote his Apology for the Chriſtians but fifty years after St *John*'s death, as appeareth by the Apology it ſelf; I mean that written to the Emperour, Senate, and People of *Rome*; for therein he tells them, that it is now one hundred and fifty years ſince Chriſt's Nativity; and St *John* died according to both *Euſebius* and St *Hierom* ſixty eight years after his Paſſion; and therefore a 1000 or 101 after his Birth. Now *Juſtin* in

Part II. ſeveral of his undoubted Books expreſly contradicteth that Doctrine; and ſo he doth particularly in his Firſt Apology, *viz.* that to *Antoninus Pius*; which the forementioned *Euſebius* and St *Hierom* ſay was the firſt, though it be ſet in the ſecond place. The like alſo doth *Athenagoras* who was *Juſtin*'s Equal; and *Irenæus* frequently, who was Scholar to *Polycarpus*, who was Scholar to St *John* the Evangeliſt. And I can give you many more inſtances, as *Tatianus*, *Tertullian*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, *&c.* but that this is a moſt plain and confeſſed caſe.

Philal. This Doctrine, as it hath of late years been ſtated, (as I have been informed) was never known till fourteen hundred years after our Saviours Birth, in the Chriſtian world.

Theoph. But I aſſure you, *Philalethes*, whoſoever told you ſo, miſinformed you: For that which is

as

as like to it as an Egg is to an Egg, or Milk to Milk, was held and taught in the first Ages of the Church. Part II.

Philal. You seem now to contradict what you last said.

Theoph. No, but I do not.

Philal. By *whom* was it taught then?

XXXIV. *That the Old Gnosticks were great Friends to it.*

Theoph. By the Old *Gnosticks*; as you will see if you consult *Irenæus*, and *Origens* Philocalia: where you have them urging the very same Scriptures for it, that are now urged; and by those Fathers, but especially by *Origen*, you shall find them answered. And by this means it was that the first Fathers were so express in declaring themselves in this matter.

Philal. Those *Gnosticks* (as ancient as they were) are but a slender Credit to that Cause they are found Friends to.

Theoph. They were (as I can

Part II.

largely ſhew you) the moſt monſtrous *Hereticks* that ever the Chriſtian Church was infeſted with, from its firſt Plantation to this very day; as many other vile ones as there have been: And they were as horribly prophane *Devils* alſo, as ever the Earth bore: And the Doctrine of Men's being under an irreſiſtible Fate of being wicked and miſerable, or good and happy, was their great Encouragement ſo to be, as appeareth by their being ſo concerned for the propagation of it. Nor were they ſo meal-mouthed as to ſtick at declaring the too natural ſequel from it that all good men abominate, *viz.* *That God is the Author of ſin*: As alſo that other which all ſuch muſt abominate alſo, that underſtand it, *viz.* That all Vertue and Vice are made ſo by arbitrary Laws; and founded in the Divine Will; that is, that they are meer φάνλασα, only imaginary things,

things, and nothing in themſelves. Well, *Philalethes*, it is high time to have done with this, we are gotten into a large field, and ſcarcely know how to get out of it. The truth is, I did not think, when we entered on this Diſcourſe, to be held in it one quarter of this time; but one word hath inſenſibly drawn on another; and indeed we may as eaſily perſiſt in it twice thus long. Let us therefore bethink our ſelves, and proceed to what remaineth. Part II.

Philal. I ſhall only deſire firſt to mind you of a paſſage I have read in the Life of the moſt Judicious and Pious Mr *Joſeph Mede*, written by the Learned Dr *Worthington*, and affixed to his Elaborate Works; which is this: *If at at any time* (as it was ſaid of St *Paul* at *Athens*) *his Spirit was ſtirred in him, it was when he obſerved ſome to contend with an unmeaſurable confidence, and bitter zeal, for the Black Doctrine of Abſolute Reprobation,*

XXXV. *Mr Joſeph Mede his Judgment concerning this Point.*

Part II.

tion, upon which occasion he could not forbear to tell some of his Friends, that it was an Opinion he could never digest; being herein much of Dr Jacksons *mind, that generally the Propugners of such Tenets were men resolved in their Affections of Love and* Hatred, *both of which they exercised constantly, and violently, and according to their own tempers, made a judgment of God and his Decrees.* Several more passages relating to the same matter, you may (if you have not already) *there* also read; which shew his judgment in this particular; as much a *Calvinist* as he was accounted.

XXXVI. *The Church of* England *no favourer of it.*

Theoph. He therein shewed himself to be of his Mother the Church of *England*'s temper; who injoyns us, in Her 17 Article, To receive Gods Promises in such wise, as they are generally set forth to us in Holy Scriptures. And now let us return to those Sons of Hers, that were the occasion of all this Talk. And take

take notice, that as in *this* laſt, ſo in divers other of thoſe Points, about which there hath been ſo great a Conteſt, and which have raiſed ſuch Feuds and Animoſities betwixt Proteſtants, their moderation is very remarkable. For they have not (as hath been too general a practice) Endeavoured to run as far from their Adverſaries as poſſibly they could; but carefully obſerving what truth may be found in their Opinions, and heedfully ſeparating it from what they conceive Erroneous in them, they have, I ſay in ſome more, which with too great heat have been Controverted among us, ſteered a middle Courſe; which time will not admit me now to inlarge upon, and therefore I will not ſo much as inſtance in them.

XXXVII. *The Moderation of thoſe Divines in other matters of Controverſie which* Theophilus *hath not time to inſiſt upon, very remarkable.*

Philal. Therefore it is no great wonder, that it fares with them, as uſually it doth with thoſe that endeavour

Part II.

deavour to part a fray, that they are beaten on both sides, and exclaimed against by the hot men of the several extreams.

XXXVIII. *None more disliked by them than the Monopolizers of Truth to a Party.*

Theoph. But whomsoever they dissent from, there are none they can worse brook, than the Monopolizers of Truth to a Party, or those that make the judgments of such, as they most admire, the Standards of it. Nor will an *ipse dixit* be admitted by them as a sufficient Argument to prove any Doctrine by, if it be understood of any but God himself: They not thinking the wisest and best of men, or *Churches* either, as priviledged from a possibility of being deceived. They therefore look upon it as very unreasonable, for any to go about to knock down their Adversaries with humane Authorities, and to deprive each other of their liberty to judge for themselves.

Philal.

XXXIX. *Infallibility in the best of Men, or Churches, denyed by them.*

Philal. This is so great a fault, that it is not possible any *Protestant* should be guilty of it, and not contradict his own professed Principles. For do we not all most highly condemn the Practice of the Roman Church, in erecting an infallible Chair for the Judicial deciding of Controversies in Religion, and to give men the true sense of Scripture?

Theoph. And upon the same grounds, that all Protestants complain of that Corrupted Church; these Persons greatly blame those, whose practice is in this particular, like to theirs: and that while they inveigh against the Pope, make Popes of themselves; or of the Masters of their several Sects; and so intrench, as he doth, upon God's Authority.

Philal. But I perceive, there

Part II.

are those among our selves that seem, by their talk, to lay no less weight upon the Judgment of the Church, than the Papists themselves do.

XL. *Of the infallibility of the Church, and those Protestants that seem to be Sticklers for it.*

Theoph. But I would gladly hear them speak out, and tell us what Church they mean. Surely they cannot mean the Church of *England*; for if she be infallible, it is more than she knows or believes her self; for whoever reads her Articles, may swear she renounceth all claim to Infallibility. But if she did not, how miserably would she be baffled out of her Pretence thereto by her Sons Arguments against the infallibility of the Church of *Rome*?

Philal. I suppose they mean the Truly Ancient, Catholick and Apostolick Church.

Theoph. Very good; But where shall we look for her Decrees?

If

If it be ſaid in the Writings of the Apoſtles; we will cry up the Churches infallibility, and believing as ſhe believeth as much as any. But then, who ſhall judge of the true ſenſe of thoſe Writings, in matters diſputable?

Philal. Surely they ſay more than ſo.

Theoph. Will they ſay, That the Churches Judgment is to be found in the Ancient Fathers? But we are like to be but ſorrily helped by that means too, they differing ſo much among themſelves, as 'tis well known they do; and there being but *few* things, if *any*, beſides ſuch as are moſt plainly revealed, wherein they are all unanimous. And in *ſuch* points, why may not *We* alſo be unanimous, and that as well without their help as with it?

Philal. But there are ſome that

Part II.

XLI. *Of acquieſcing in the Four firſt Oecumenical Councils.*

cry up the Four firſt Oecumenical Councils, as our great Standard; and aſſert that their Determinations ought to be by all acquieſced in.

Theoph. But there are few Controverted Points determined by them; what then ſhall we do as to all other? But beſides, what aſſurance have we that thoſe Councils aſcribed Infallibility to themſelves? But ſuppoſe they did, muſt we believe them infallible upon their own bare word? If any will aſſert ſo, they muſt prove it, except we are bound to believe them as infallible as thoſe Councils; and if they undertake to prove this, who ſhall judge whether they do it well or no? They muſt ſay every man's own reaſon, or hold their peace; and if ſo, then all is at laſt to be thereinto reſolved. Nor is it any mens ſaying that

General

General Councils are infallible, that will cauſe conſiderative men one jot the ſooner to embrace their Decrees, unleſs their underſtandings be firſt convinced by a proof of it. If any will ſay, that thoſe Councils proved themſelves, or ſhall for them go about to prove that they were infallible; the ſame Queſtion recurrs, who ſhall judge whether this be done convincingly? And ſo the matter comes again to the ſame Iſſue. Part II.

Philal. But you do not *contemn* the Authoriy of thoſe Councils?

Theoph. I am ſo far from it, that I have a great Veneration both for the Ancient Fathers, and all General Councils that have been impartially Called; and whoſe members have been under no reſtraint, but were freely permitted to ſpeak their minds, and give their

Part II.

their Suffrages; but I must tell you, that such have been at *most* very *rarely* known. Yet I will not ascribe more to such neither, than I have good reason for; much less will I believe them infallible against plain reasons, too many to be now given. If I could think any so, I should be most inclined to believe it, of the Great Jewish Sanhedrin, because the Jews were expressly Commanded to stand to their Determinations; but he that will say *that* Council could not err, must renounce his Christianity, and believe that it justly Condemn'd our Saviour.

Philal. What is the Veneration then that you say you have for those Councils?

XLII. *What respect is due to Councils.*

Theoph. I say, that we ought rather to suspect our own private Judgments, than without very apparent reason to conclude their

their Determinations falſe. And moreover, that it is our duty in order to the preſerving of the Churches peace, not publickly to oppoſe them, whatſoever opinion we have of them. For ſuppoſing them obnoxious to errour, yet I will grant them to have the Authority of Courts of Appeal, and that their Power is ſo great as to bind men to outward ſubmiſſion, when their errours are not ſo weighty as to preponderate the Churches peace. But though we ought for peace-ſake to ſubmit to them, in all things that are not contrary to the great Eſſentials of our Faith; yet (as I ſaid) there is no warrant for our being obliged to aſſent to their Decrees (*quatenus* ſo) as infallibly true. But for all this ſaying, neither I, nor thoſe friends of ours (who are all, I believe, of the ſame Judgment in this point)

Part II.

point) do no leſs value all General Councils then doth our Mother the Church of *England*, as appears by what ſhe ſaith of them in her 21 Article, whoſe words are theſe; *General Councils may not be gathered together without the Commandment and Will of Princes. And when they be gathered together, foraſmuch as they be an Aſſembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God, they may erre, and ſometime have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as neceſſary to Salvation, have neither Strength nor Authority, unleſs it may be declared that they are taken out of Holy Scripture.* And it will not be amiſs to mind you alſo; that in her 19 Article ſhe declares not onely that the Church of *Rome*, but alſo that thoſe of *Jeruſalem*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch* have actually erred. By theſe Citations you will eaſily gueſs, who are moſt of the Church of *England*'s

XLIII. *The Church of England's ſenſe of General Councils.*

Judgment

Judgment in this Point; whether *we* or *those* Persons, whose talk we but now took notice of, and which occasioned this Discourse. And the like to what was said of General Councils, we also most heartily acknowledge concerning our own particular Church, *viz.* That we are bound by no means to oppose the Determinations of her Governours and Representatives in disputable Matters; nor do they (as hath been shewn) require our internal Assent to their Articles, but enjoyn our submission to them, as to an Instrument of Peace onely. And what wise and good man can think, though he should suppose them (not only subject to error, but likewise) to have actually erred in some of them, that Contention about them can by any means make amends for the loss of the Churches Peace?

XLIV. *The Determinations of our own Church not to be opposed in Matters disputable.*

Philal. It is too apparent that those which contend for an Infallible Judg

Part II.

of Controverſies in Religion, are like to do no ſervice towards the ending of them, but indeed ſo much diſſervice as to encreaſe them. Seeing there is nothing more hard to prove, than that there is any ſuch Judge; and, if there be, where he is to be found: And in the determining of this Controverſie, the Reaſon of every mans own mind muſt be appealed to, except there be another Judge to reſolve us concerning that Judge; and again, another to ſatisfie us concerning him, and ſo we ſhall never have done. And I look upon this as a moſt certain Argument, that our Saviour never intended us any other, beſides our own Reaſon, aſſiſted with his Bleſſing; for if he had, he would, no doubt, have been ſo plainly deciphered, as that there ſhould be no diſpute about him; much leſs would that which was ordained for the Churches Peace, be an unavoidable occaſion of Contention.

XLV. *An Argument that Chriſt intended us no infallible Judge of Controverſies.*

Theoph.

Part II.

Theoph. For my part, I ſee no need of any other Judge, for the Rule of our Faith, the Scripture, is in all Eſſential Points ſo plain, that we can not reaſonably deſire to have it plainer: And moreover, in ſuch Points, every private honeſt Chriſtian hath a promiſe of Infallibility in the ſame ſence, that the Church Repreſentative hath. *If any man will do his Will,* (ſaith our Saviour) *he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God,* John 7. 17. *If ye continue in my Words, then are ye my Diſciples indeed; and ye ſhall know the Truth,* Joh. 8. 31, 32. & ſeveral other promiſes there are to the ſame purpoſe. I grant, the Church cannot err in *Fundamentals,* while ſhe continues ſo, for ſhould ſhe, ſhe would, *ipſo facto,* ceaſe ſo to be; and therefore the ſame is to be aſſerted alſo concerning every particular Member of it. And as for *Circumſtantials,* why may not men diſpute about them, and maintain peace and love notwithſtanding? What is

XLVI. *Private Chriſtians promiſed Infallibility in the ſame ſence that the Church Repreſentative hath the promiſe of it.*

Part II.

there in not thinking juſt alike in doubtful Matters, that ſhould make people ſo much as angry with each other? I like not, I confeſs, a Diſputatious wrangling and contradicting Humour; I deſpiſe nothing more; it argues thoſe, in whom it is obſervable, to have attained to no ſolid judgment or ſenſe of things; and beſides, there is a deal of conceitedneſs and pride in it, and too much, ordinarily, of a croſs-graind and ill nature. But amicable Diſputes ſometimes, meerly in order to the finding out of Truth, can have no other than a good effect: and moreover, they add much to the pleaſure of Converſation. And therefore let the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity labour for the true ſpirit and temper of Chriſtians; and it will be as well with the Chriſtian World, as if we were all of the ſame mind. I mean, let us not magiſterially impoſe upon one another, and be ſo charitable as to believe well of

XLVII. *Of Diſputacity.*

XLVIII. *Of Friendly Diſputes.*

XLIX. *The way to peace.*

Diſ-

Part II.

Diſſenters from us that live good lives, are of a modeſt and peaceable deportment, and hold no Opinions, that directly oppoſe the deſign of the Chriſtian Religion, and of making men like to God; and then we ſhall ſee, that there will be little reaſon to deſire an Infallible Judge of Controverſies, to make us all of one Opinion. So that by this pleading for one, (the Caſe ſtanding as it doth) there is no hope of having an end put to them, but by this means (as you ſaid well) is there another Controverſie added to the reſt; and this alone, except it were more plainly decidable than it is, may cauſe as much wrangling, as the Church is now diſturbed with.

L. *The miſchief of contending for an Infallible Judge.*

So that, *Philalathes*, thoſe Friends of ours cannot but judge it a piece of Tyranny, too near of kin to that of the Cruel *Procruſtes*, for any to endeavour to force others to be juſt of their pitch and ſize in Opinions, and to approve of their Sentiments.

LI. *Forcing others to be of our mind tyrannical.*

Philal.

Part II.

Philal. And well they may: For by this means, though men may make Hypocrites, and cause some to profess what they do not believe, yet they can never make any sincere Converts; but rather so much the more alienate Dissenters, both in their Judgments and Affections, from their *Religion.*

Theoph. There cannot be a more effectual Course taken so to do, than this is. And though men of some Tempers may not be able to contain themselves from over-much warmth in managing a Dispute; yet it is no less unreasonable to *malign* our Brethren, because they are not in every thing, or in several things of our Judgment, than to quarrel with each other, upon the account of the unlikeness we observe, in our Faces and Constitutions.

LII. *To condemn men for dissenting from us unwarrantable.*

Philal. 'Tis, surely, utterly unwarrantable, and most unaccountable to Censure and Condemn those Persons

as

as Hereticks, that diſſent from us in any matters, not very clearly revealed in Scripture, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they do ſo. It being very evident, that where its ſence is doubtful, we have a liberty of thinking one way or other: and that we are not ſo much as *Culpable* in miſunderſtanding ſuch places as are capable of various Interpretations, if we are not wanting to our ſelves in our endeavours to underſtand them; If we ſuffer not our ſelves to be lead by Parties, Prejudices, and the like, in our Enquiries after Truth. Part II.

Theoph. Our underſtandings are not free, as are our wills; but the Acts of them are natural and neceſſary: Nor can they judge but according to the Evidence that is preſented. The Underſtanding is like the the Eye, which cannot *apprehend* the Object, but as it offereth it ſelf; nor can it otherwiſe *judge* of Objects, than the nature of the Reaſons that are offered will endure.

Philal.

Part II.

Philal. But *Theophilus*, though that faculty can never properly deserve blame, when it is deceived; yet mens *Wills* may, and I fear often do; and that many suffering them to lie under the power of prejudice, and to be governed by some inordinate affection, are by that means careless of providing their understandings with due helps for making a true judgment.

Theoph. You say well; but this no man can be a competent Judge of in any one that doth not declare it by unwarrantable practising upon his Opinions; and therefore to be incensed against men meerly for not being of our mind, and not having the same thoughts that we have in uncertain points, may be to find fault with the make of their Intellectuals, and to condemn them for that which they cannot help.

Philal. If our Saviour had laid such great weight, as too many nowadayes do, on such things; if he had made

made a right understanding and belief of them a necessary condition of Salvation, we may be assured that the love he beareth to man-kind, would have caused him to speak most plainly, and to have taken a course that his Apostles should do so likewise, where it is of such infinite importance not to mistake his meaning. Part II.

LIII. *Of those Divines candour towards dissenters from them.*

Theoph. There is no doubt to be made of it. Now then I say, *Philalethes*, that those Divines, from these Considerations, and such like, are not at all forward to conclude any man an Heretick, or erring damnably, that is of a Perswasion contrary to theirs; supposing his Opinions do not so evidently contradict the Scriptures, as that it is unimaginable how any should not see it, that do not purposely shut their eyes. And can hope well of any one, notwithstanding his mistakes, if they be not inconsistent

Part II.

ſiſtent with true Goodneſs, and have no bad influence upon his Practice. They are ſo perſwaded of the graciouſneſs of the Divine Nature, that they verily believe that *ſimple* Errors ſhall be deſtructive to none, I mean, *thoſe* which men have not contracted by their own default; and that where miſtakes proceed not from evil affections, and an erring *judgment* from a corrupt *heart*, through the goodneſs of God, they ſhall not prove damnable. But that he will allow, and make abatements for the weakneſs of Mens Parts, their Complections, Educations, and other ill Circumſtances, whereby they may be even *fatally* inclined to certain falſe Perſwaſions.

Philal. I remember, to this purpoſe, a good ſaying of the Learned and Pious *Chillingworth*, in his excellent Book againſt the *Papiſts*. *I am* (ſaith he) *verily perſwaded, that*

Errors

Errors ſhall not be imputed to them as ſins, who uſe ſuch a meaſure of induſtry in finding Truth, as humane Prudence, and ordinary Diſcretion (their Abilities and Opportunities, their Diſtractions and Hindrances, and all other things conſidered) ſhall adviſe them to.

Theoph. 'Tis a ſaying, like one of that brave Perſons, who had he lived till theſe dayes, would moſt aſſuredly have been branded with the hateful long Name, as he was before his death; with thoſe of *Papiſt* and *Socinian* (and which adds to the wonder) for the ſake of that his Book.

LIV. *Of Mr.* Ch lingworth's *Book.*

Philal. I ſcarcely ever more admired at any thing, then at the Character I have read of that Piece.

Theoph. As vile a Book as not only all *Papiſts*, but ſome alſo that would be thought no Friends to them think it; I am ſure he would do a very excellent piece of Service, (which all good *Proteſtants*

Part II.

would have cauſe to thank him for) that would take the pains to tranſlate it into the Latin Tongue. I think it great pitty that it ſhould be kept lockt up in our own Language. But to proceed, as that Gentleman was not, ſo *theſe* alſo we are ſpeaking of, are not at all forward to give a Catalogue of Fundamentals; but inſtead thereof, content themſelves to tell their Hearers, that it is ſufficient for any mans Salvation, that he aſſent to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, that he carefully endeavour to underſtand their true meaning, ſo far as concerns his own duty, and to order his life accordingly. And that he whoſe Conſcience tells him, upon an impartial inquiry into himſelf, that he doth thus, need not fear that he erreth damnably. But into the number of the Doctrines, they account Fundamentals, they will by no means

LV. *Of their Opinion concerning Fundamentals, and that they are not forward to give a catalogue of them.*

means admit any, that are not plainly revealed, as hath been already intimated, with the reason why. And for the same reason they doubt not, but that according to mens various Capacities, means of knowledge, and such like; the same points of Faith may be to some fundamental, and to others not: I mean, may be necessary to be known, and explicitely believed by some, but not so by others; which was likewise before in effect said. Part II.

LVI. *The use of the foregoing Principles.*

Philal. Well, *Theophilus*, you have imparted to me, I thank you, very excellent Principles. Without doubt they would be greatly effectual to the cementing of our present differences, and healing our lamentable wide Breaches, if they were generally entertained by Christians, and improved. What a brave World should we have, would we but all practise upon such

Part II.

ſuch Principles? This would be the way to unite thoſe in *Affection*, that differ in *Opinion*.

Theoph. And this would be the way too, to make far fewer differences in Opinion: For then would not men be ſuperſtitiouſly fearful of impartially examining thoſe Doctrines, the truth of which, they now think it a ſin ſo much as to call in queſtion. And by this means, taking all thoſe they have been inſtructed in for granted, there is little hope of ever undeceiving them. Theſe Principles, being well digeſted, will likewiſe mightily quiet mens minds, and cure them of all tormenting fears, of their being out of the true way to Bleſſedneſs, while they are not conſcious to themſelves of living in the allowance of any known ſin, or neglect of any ſuch duty, that they ſeek Truth impartially, and adopt

not

not any Opinion, in order to the gratifying of any corrupt affection. Part II.

Philal. They will certainly unshakle, and disintangle mens minds and give them their due liberty; they will enlarge and widen their Souls, and make them in an excellent and most commendable sence, men of Latitude.

Theoph. You make me smile at that conceit. But yet, *Philalethes*, as excellent and very useful as they are, and must needs appear to be, to any one that will give himself leave to consider them, those Friends of ours, by their endeavours to propagate them, have procured to themselves enemies of divers sorts. Their thus doing, vexeth to the heart all peremptory and magisterial Dictators of whatsoever Party they be: This whets the Tongues of those against them, whose great ambition it is to *lead*, &

LVII. *That those Divines procure to themselves Enemies of divers sorts, by their endeavours to propagate those Principles.*

of

Part II.

of thoſe no leſs, that take as great pleaſure in being *led*, and in following blind-fold either ſome particular *men*, or certain *Church*.

Philal. Concerning theſe latter, it may be ſaid, (as *Tacitus* doth of ſome) that they are, *Nati ad Servitutem*, Born to be Slaves; and think bondage a great bleſſing: For otherwiſe how could they be ſo highly diſpleaſed with the charity of thoſe that would ſet them free? I preſume, *Theophilus*, that it might be upon this account that ſo much Choler diſcovered it ſelf in a Reverend Doctor, (whoſe *years* alone, it might be thought, ſhould have taught him much more diſcretion) and provoked the angry man, not very long ſince, to ſhoot from the Pulpit moſt dreadful Thunderbolts againſt theſe Divines, in a Learned Auditory.

Theoph. There are thoſe that ſuſpect, that 'twas envy chiefly that put him upon taking ſo much vain pains

to render them odious to Gentlemen too wiſe, to do other than pity him for his labour; he finding himſelf (as great as he thinks his own deſerts) leſs regarded, than ſome of thoſe vile perſons. Moreover, *Philalethes*, thence it is that ſome who have more Zeal than Diſcretion, (and I wiſh I had not cauſe to ſay more Paſſion and Pride than either) do inveigh againſt them as thoſe, that are ſo far from true Sons of the Church, that they are her Enemies, and undermine her; and more dangerous people than the worſt of Sects. And thence it is that others too, who are of the ſame temper, though of a contrary Faction, joyn with theſe in accuſing them as men luke-warm in the Cauſe of God, and unconcerned for the Orthodox Religion; nay ſuch as are ſo far from contending earneſtly for the Faith once given to the Saints, that they expoſe it, and endanger the loſs of it. Part II.

Part II. *Philal.* I think in my Conſcience, they take the only courſe to preſerve it. But it ſeems thoſe men take it for granted, in the mean time, that thoſe Opinions they are pleaſed to call theirs, muſt needs be of no leſs account with God, than with themſelves; and that thoſe they think good to brand with the black mark of Fundamental Hereſies, cannot be otherwiſe; and that there can be no effectual confuting of them, but when the Perſons that hold them are curſed with Bell, Book, and Candle, and have the ſevereſt and moſt diſmal of Sentences paſt upon them.

Part III *Theoph.* You may be ſure of it. But is it not time, think you, *Philalethes*, to acquaint you with thoſe Divines Judgment in Matters of Diſcipline?

I. *Their judgment in matters of Diſcipline.* *Philal.* Yes, if you think ſo.

Theoph. Come on then. This following, be you aſſured, is a true account thereof. Namely, That to all

Forms

Forms of Eccleſiaſtical Government, they greatly prefer that of *Epiſcopacy*; becauſe it is apparent that ſo much as is *eſſential* to that Government, did univerſally take place in the Church preſently after the Apoſtles times, and therefore it is very probable that it was alſo in their dayes: It being hardly conceivable, that ſo great an alteration as that of *Presbyterian*, or Congregational to *Epiſcopal* Government, could in a little time have prevailed over all the World, and have continued for ſo many Ages together, if it had been otherwiſe. Part III

II. *That they prefer Epiſcopacy to all other Forms of Church Government.*

Philal. How much do they or you conceive to be Eſſential to *Epiſcopacy*, and therefore agreeable to the Primitive Pattern?

Theoph. Mr. *Chillingworth* ſhall anſwer you that Queſtion. *If we abſtract* (ſaith he) *from Epiſcopal Government all Accidentals, and conſider onely what is* eſſential *and* neceſſary *to it; We ſhall find in it no more than this: An appoint-*

III. *How much eſſential to Epiſcopacy.*

Part III

pointment of one man of eminent Sanctity, and Sufficiency to have the care of all the Churches, within a certain Precinct or Diocess; and furnishing him with Authority (not Absolute or Arbitrary, but regulated and bounded by Laws, and moderated, by joyning to him a convenient number of Assistants) to the intent that all the Churches under him may be provided of good and able Pastors: and that both of Pastors and People conformity to Laws, and performance of their duties may be required, under Penalties, not left to discretion, but by Law appointed.

IV. *That they unchurch not those Churches that will not admit it, though they think it desirable that all would.*

Philal. By the account you have given me of those Divines, I am confident they do not unchurch those Churches that will not admit of this Government, as highly as they themselves approve of it.

Theoph. If they should, they would be very inconsistent with their own Principles. But let me tell you, they cannot but look upon it as very desirable, that those few Churches that refuse

refuse it, would receive it, upon more accounts than that of its great Antiquity. I need not tell you, that they moreover believe the Civil Magistrate to have a Power, both Legislative and Judiciary, as well in *Sacred*, as in *Civil Affairs*.

Part III

V. *Their Opinion of the power of the civil Magistrate in Sacred Affairs.*

Philal. But this will not be admitted by many *Protestants*, any more than by the *Papists* themselves.

Theoph. I know it will not; and that some very fiercely talk against it, where they think they may do it safely, but they bewray too much ignorance in so doing. For (as the Learned Author of the Ancient Liberty of the Britannick Church hath shewn) as Fathers of Families were at first both Princes and Priests, and as by the encrease of Families, and their enlargement into Cities and Communities, the Oeconomick Authority at length became Politick: So it is apparant, that in the first Institution of Priesthood, *Moses* took away

VI. *That the Civil Magistrate hath a power both Legislative and Judiciary in Ecclesiastical Affairs.*

Part III

away no part of the Supream Jurisdiction from the Politick Authority; for he, as King of *Jesurun*, was constituted by God himself the Keeper, as well of both Trumpets, as Tables. And as *Moses*, not *Aaron*, delivered the Ceremonial Law; so long after *Moses*, King *David*, instituted the Courses of Priests, and *Solomon* thrust out *Abiathar* the High Priest. And when Christ inaugurated his Apostles, he furnisht them with great powers of his own, such as the Administration of Sacraments, and the power of the Keys; but all that he bestowed on them, he did it Cumulatively, and nought at all Privitively; for he detracted nothing from the Authority of the Civil Power; nor gave any Commandment that Kings, because Christians, should have their Jurisdiction abated. But you may find this Subject excellently, and more fully handled, in the former

mer part of the Discourse of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, lately publisht. Part III

Philal. Seeing, *Theophilus*, those Divines are of those good Subjects, that heartily acknowledge the Kings Majesty to be Supream Governour, in these his Dominions, in all Causes, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil; they must needs likewise believe, that the Church Government He hath Constituted, may not without the guilt of Rebellion be violently opposed, or of Sedition, be in any kind affronted by any of his Subjects.

VII. *Their Opinion of the Authority of the Church.*

Theoph. You may be assured of it, *Philalethes*, of any (as well as them) that are not next door to Mad-men. And these our Friends acknowledge also, that it is in the power of the Governours of the Church to Compose Forms of Prayer to be used in Publick; and such Rites as they in their Wisdom shall conceive most proper for the decent, orderly and Reverend Solemnizing of Divine Wor-

Part III

Worſhip: And that it is the duty of all under their Authority to Submit to the uſe of ſuch Forms; ſuppoſing the matter of them be agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and that they are directed onely and immediately to God in the Name of Chriſt; and that they ought to conform to thoſe Rites, ſo long as they are of an indifferent nature, and not impoſed as neceſſary in themſelves, or eſſential parts of Worſhip, or to recommend the Worſhippers to God, and make their Service accepted, or to convey Grace, or as laying an Antecedent Bond upon the Judgment, as well as on the Practice; but only as things alterable, and in their own nature indifferent: And ſuch they conceive the Forms of Prayer, now enjoyned, to be; and the other Rites of our Church; and to be no otherwiſe than as ſuch impoſed.

Philal. But do they not likewiſe hold that Governors are obliged not only

only to make choice of ſuch Rites as are in their own nature indifferent; and to impoſe them as ſuch, but alſo to beware how they enjoyn any, that they are not on good grounds aſſured are for Edification?

Theoph. This is out of doubt: And I preſume they alſo believe; that no Rites may be enjoyned, that are known to be but by accident, and the infirmity of the people generally inconvenient. But yet though Governors ſhould miſcarry in the diſcharge of their duty, they queſtion not but that the people are bound to obey them, while they command nothing but what is *lawful*, though it ſhould be *inconvenient*.

VIII. *That they believe Magiſtrates are to be obeyed when they command things inconvenient, if lawful.*

Philal. That Command of the Apoſtle; *Obey them that have the Rule over you in the Lord*, hath no ſuch limitation as this annexed, [*When they command things convenient.*] We are alſo required to ſubmit to *every* Ordinance of Man, for the Lords ſake:

Part III

Whether it be to the King as Supream, or unto Governors, as thoſe that are ſent by him.

Theoph. Nor ought that limitation to be implyed in theſe or the like Precepts: For that, though thoſe that are under Authority ought to judge for themſelves what is *lawful*; yet it is moſt unreaſonable, that the judgment of what is *convenient*, ſhould not be left to their Governors.

Philal. Nothing is more apparent, than that if the people ſhould have this liberty, it would tend to the invalidating of all Laws, and utter ſubverſion of Government.

Theoph. That's certain: Therefore theſe Divines, though they could heartily wiſh that nothing may be injoyned in the Worſhip of God among us, but what (conſidering the very outward Circumſtances we are in) may be as *expedient* as *lawful*; yet they eſteem it as unqueſtionably true, that the people ought to obey, even

even in those things that the Magistrate should not command: And that a certain duty (and such is Obedience to Authority) may not be forborn upon uncertain Conjectures, or any miscarriage in those to whom they owe it. The mischiefs of contending with Governors about supposed inconvenient things, being incomparably greater, than any that can follow upon obedience in such things. Part III

Philal. By what you have said, I easily guess what Opinion they have of that conceit, that hath of late years been broached and practised upon, *viz.* That when the Supream Magistrate refuseth to reform what is amiss in Church or State; the Subjects ought to take that work into their own hands.

* IX. *That they judge it unlawful for the people to take Arms against their Prince on any pretence.*

* *Theoph.* Do you only *guess* at it? You may be most certain, that they judge no Fancy more wild and mad, nor of more pernicious Consequence.

Part III

And know also that they profess unfeignedly to *believe* (as well as subscribe to it) that it is unlawful for the people to take up Arms against their Prince, or those commissionated by Him, upon any pretence whatsoever. I need not now inform you, *Philalethes*, whom by their forementioned Moderation, they greatly offend: You know that also upon *that* account they are condemned by some; who without any reason take themselves to be the only Sons of the Church, as false Friends to her: And that as by acknowledging no more, they anger that extream; so, by granting so much, they no less displease the other. But to proceed:

X. *That they are for shewing favour to Dissenters out of Conscience.*

These persons are not more for obedience to all lawful Commands of Authority, than desirous that Mercy and Indulgence should be shewn towards those whose Consciences will not permit them to comply with

the

the Will of their Governours in ſome things diſputable. Part III

Philal. But do they not conceive it to be moſt unfit, that *Seditious* Practices ſhould paſs unpuniſht?

Theoph. Yes that they do: And do believe that thoſe Diſſenters from the eſtabliſht way of Religion, ought not to be eſteemed or dealt with as men of tender Conſciences, who are not quiet and peaceable, modeſt and charitable in their behaviour towards thoſe, that are not of their Way and Mind: And that think it not enough, not to obey; but they muſt needs be likewiſe confronting Authority; and refuſe to yeeld Obedience in thoſe things againſt the lawfulneſs of which there can be no pretence, that carrieth any ſhew of Reaſon.

XI. *Whom they conceive are not to be dealt with as men of tender Conſciences.*

Philal. I ſuppoſe they cannot but look upon it as extreamly deſirable, that (if our Governours ſhall

Part III

ſhall ſee it good) the tearms of Communion with the Church of *England*, and likewiſe of exerciſing the Miniſterial Function therein, may be ſo inlarged, as to take in all that are of any Reaſon, Sobriety and Moderation.

Theoph. I wonder that all wiſe men ſhould not; it being ſo very plain a caſe, that this would tend exceedingly to the Churches ſecurity, and the ſtrengthening of her hands againſt unreaſonable, ill-minded, and wild-headed men of divers ſorts, who would rejoyce in nothing more, than in her utter Ruine, and are ready to catch at all advantages to effect it. And for that end, I preſume they would be very glad, if our Church Doors were ſet wider open, I mean, if ſome things that moſt offend were taken out of the way; and that no ſuch weight may be laid on any little things, as that they ſhould be

XII. Theophilus *preſumes that they would be glad, if ſome things that moſt offend were removed.*

be insisted on, to the endangering those of an higher nature, and hazarding the Churches prosperity and peace. And particularly, that there might be no Expressions in our Forms of Prayer, that contain disputable & uncertain Doctrines; and so give occasion to those that are dissatisfied concerning the truth of them, to refuse to joyn with us in those Forms: And in a word, that there might be nothing in our Ecclesiastical Constitution, that may give any plausible pretence for Separation or Non-conformity. This, I say, they cannot, I am perswaded, but heartily desire, but with submission to the wisdom of their Governors. Part III

And now, *Philalethes*, I have performed my promise of giving you an impartial Representation of those our Friends; and I pray tell me your thoughts, in a few words, upon the whole matter.

Philal.

Part III

XIII. Philalethes *his Opinion upon the whole account.*

Philal. From the account you have, I thank you, given me, I cannot but confidently conclude, that were many more tongues let loose against them than there are; there would need no other Solution of the *Phœnomenon*, than that of the Philosopher, *A wise man is the greatest Prodigy*. And I believe them the only sort of men, that are in any likely-hood of, or qualified for the repairing of our present dangerous Breaches, and curing our very ill presaging Animosities.

Theoph. For my part, I must profess to you, that I could scarcely perswade my self once to hope, that there may be any prevention of our utter Confusion, but that it hath pleased the Divine Providence to raise up among us so considerable a number of such good spirited and generously minded Persons, the thoughts whereof

are

are my beſt Antidote againſt De- Part III
ſpondence.

Philal. That they chiefly deſign the propagation of Truth, and true Goodneſs, and not any private ſelfiſh intereſt, from what hath been ſaid I have cauſe to conclude: For the Practices and Principles that diſtinguiſh them from other men, have never yet, in any times, been the way to raiſe any; but the contrary.

Theoph. 'Tis certain they have not. And the great reaſon why the *Bigots* of our ſeveral Parties, do chiefly ſet themſelves againſt *them*, muſt needs be becauſe they are aware, that of all their other Adverſaries, there are none that do them ſo much diſſervice as do theſe, by ſhewing, that thoſe things they raiſe ſuch a duſt about, and make ſuch a hideous ſtir and noiſe, ſignifie nothing (what ere they pretend) to the promoting of true

XIV. *Why the* Bigots *of the ſeveral Parties are moſtly* their *Enemies.*

Part III

Religion, the advancement of Chriſt's Kingdom, and the real and true welfare of his Church, but are available only to the carrying on of ſuch little, narrow, and low deſigns as the making & ſtrengthning of Sects and Parties, and gaining to themſelves Greatneſs and Popularity. Thoſe high and hot Gentlemen know very well, that if theſe perſons Principles ſhould once get good footing among the People, they muſt either grow more cool in thoſe matters that do moſt exerciſe their Zeal, or there will be little for them to do.

Philal. The truth is, thoſe men trouble themſelves moſt about matters which (as an excellent Perſon ſaith) are neither Religion, nor the Body of Religion, nor ſcarcely the *Garment* of the Body of Religion; but are rather the Fringes of the Garment of the Body

dy of Religion. They are Things, or rather Circumstances and manners of things, wherein the Soul and Spirit are not at all concerned. Part III

Theoph. But yet as great an Antipathy as those kind of men profess against these Persons; I observe there are Prudent and Moderate Men in some of the Parties, that have a reverend esteem of them, and look upon them as men very valuable. Which Sober Persons are no less honoured and loved by *them* also; between whom the difference in Opinion is so inconsiderable, that it is pity there should be any distinction of Names between them.

XV. *That it is pity there should be any distinction of name between them and the moderate men of some parties.*

Philal. And if the generality of each of our Parties were as true to the Cause of Christ Jesus, and so self-denying, as to prefer his Interest before their own; I question not but that they and their Principles, would find incomparably more Friends among them, than they do now Enemies.

Part III

XVI. *What Name they only desire to be known by.*

Theoph. But whereas I now spake of the distinction of Names, I must desire you to take notice, that if others were not better at Coining them, than these our Friends are, they would be known by no other than the good old *Antiochian* one, *viz. Christians*, or (if they must have one that is more discriminating) Obedient Sons of the Church of *England*.

Philal. To which Church I cannot better express the sincerity of my affection, than by wishing that all those who are ambitious of being accounted her most genuine Off-spring, were of the Temper and Principles of these her Children, if they were, I doubt not but that her Circumstances would be far less sad than now they are.

Theoph. Nay it is not at all then improbable, but that in due time, her condition (as seemingly desperate as at present it is) may be very good,

good. I need not tell you, *Philale-thes*, that these mens temper and free Principles are of no late standing; for they are no whit younger than Christianity it self, nor yet than the Blessed Founder of it: Who, were he now upon the Earth, and conversant here among us, would, I doubt, narrowly escape the reproach of the Long Name, as much as those that in spite and contempt use it, pretend to be his only Friends and Followers. For I might shew in several Instances, that it was upon the account of his being such a one, as they are accused for being, that the Zealous Pharisees could by no means endure him. As particularly his Free Conversation, void of all Sourness, Starchtness, & Affectation; his condemning their Ostentatious shews of Sanctimony, their base Censuring and Judging, their Scrupulous straining at Gnats, when in the mean time they swallowed Camels: Their teaching for Do-

XVII. *That their temper and free Principles are of no late standing, &c.*

XVIII. *Why the Pharisees could not endure our Saviour.*

Part III

Doctrines the Commandments of Men, and making more species or kinds of duties and sins than God hath made; Their Zeal for *Mens Traditions*, more than for *Gods Commandments*: Their great exactness in little things; such as Tything Mint, Anice, and Cummin; and preferring them before the weightier matters of the Law, Judgement, Mercy and Faith; Their placing Religion mostly in Externals; Their cloaking their Naughtiness with Long Prayers; Their accounting themselves defiled by any thing without them, *&c.* And moreover his forbidding to call none Master upon Earth, or to pin their Faith on any mens sleeves: His freely and ingenuously shewing them wherein the power of godliness consisteth, *viz.* in inward Purity and Holiness: And preaching up only an inward, real and truly Moral Righteousness.

Philal.

Philal. And to be ſure the Apoſtles did in all things follow the Example of their Great Maſter.

Theoph. Yes, no queſtion, as far as they were able: And among other, it may be ſhewn they did ſo in ſuch inſtances as the forementioned. And, I fear, were they alive now, that there are many pretended Chriſtians that would quickly change their Opinion of them, and upon ſuch accounts carry themſelves towards them (as much as now they profeſs to admire them) as our Saviour intimated to the Jews, they would towards the Prophets, were they then living, as great honour, as in garniſhing their Sepulchres, and otherwiſe they profeſſed to have for them. And for many years after our Saviour and his Apoſtles, did the temper and ſpirit we have been deſcribing, mightily prevail: but as the Chriſtian World grew worſe and worſe, which was eſpecially after it came to be freed from

XIX. *When the temper and ſpirit that have been deſcribed, began to decay in the Chriſtian World.*

Per-

Part III

Persecution, and to enjoy rest and prosperity, it more and more decayed: And the generality of Christians grew miserably narrow Soul'd, and contentious with each other about little matters, and rigorously to impose their own private Conceits upon their Brethren, and pronounce those Hereticks that would not receive and admit of them: To lay a greater stress upon that which they pleased to call *Orthodoxy*, than upon an innocent and holy Life: To evaporate Religion into meer Air and Speculations: To burthen the Worship of God with unprofitable & needless Ceremonies; and by overmuch pomp and gaudery, to rob it of its Primitive Simplicity and Spirituality: And in a word, quite to forget the great end and design of Christ's Gospel. So that the excellent Spirit we awhile since commended, seems to be utterly lost in those Places where the Bishop of *Rome* bears the sway; the very great decay

XX. *The Pope beholden to the decay thereof for his Power.*

decay of it being that to which he was first beholden for his Power. But, blessed be God, it hath been much revived in the Churches, which have thrown off his Yoak; though there are yet but few in these neither, in whom it is in that measure and degree discernable, that it was in the most Ancient Christians. And the generality of our greatest Professors are still very defective in it: And even most good men in too many Instances yet to seek for it.

Part III

XXI. *That it is much revived in the* Protestant *Churches though the generality are still greatly defective in it.*

Philal. If it were once, in some good measure, prevalent in the *Protestant* World; I am perswaded we should soon see those very Blessed Dayes, that have been so much talked of, and that all pious Souls, and good Christians long for.

* XXII. *If the invisible Antichrist were once fallen, the visible one would quickly follow it.*

**Theoph.* I verily believe we should: And that we shall not much longer wait for the downfal of the *Visible Antichrist*, if the Spiritual and Invisible One, whose Seat is erected in our own

Part III

own Breaſts, were once fallen. This being that which is like, as long as it continueth, to keep the other in his Chair, in ſpight of all our Prayers, and other *endeavours* to pluck him thence.

But my dear *Philalethes*, 'tis high time now to conclude this Diſcourſe, and refreſh our ſelves with a ſhort Supper: for we cannot but be both of us ſufficiently tyred, and hungry too.

Philal. If I am tyred, then well may you.

XXIII. *The Concluſion.*

Theoph. Yes truly am I, and as ſharp ſet, as one that hath loſt his Dinner. Wee'l therefore no longer exerciſe each others patience, than while we put up our moſt earneſt Prayer, that at length it may pleaſe the God of Peace to guide all our Feet into the way of Peace: That he would give us teachable Tempers, modeſt and meek Spirits: and that the differences in our Sentiments may ceaſe to have ſo ill an influence upon our minds

minds; as to create ſuch uncharitable heats among us, and unchriſtian Animoſities; to the great diſhonour of God; the no leſs Scandal and Reproach of our moſt Excellent Religion, the raiſing of Jealouſies in our Governours, the Expoſing our Church and State to the Common Enemies, and the greatly endangering our Immortal Souls. That the Profeſſion and Practice of Chriſtianity may not ſo rarely go hand in hand: And that we may place our Religion in *doing*, rather than in *talking* and *diſputing*: And may behave our ſelves as thoſe that underſtand wherein the Life and Power of Godlineſs doth indeed conſiſt. That [*Non magna loquimur ſed vivimus*] may be ours, as it was the Ancient Chriſtians Motto, and that the old Primitive Spirit may now at laſt prevail among us. That we may not peremptorily purſue our own pri-

vate

Part III

vate Humours, and the Concerns of Parties, and prefer them before indifferent and impartial Enquiries after Truth; or oppoſe them to the publick Peace, Reaſon and Intereſt. That we may hate a ſelfiſh, private Spirit, as unworthy of the benignity, and generoſity of the Chriſtian Religion. And laſtly, that we may contend with each other about nothing more, than who ſhall expreſs, in the midſt of our different Perſwaſions, moſt Charity and moſt Candour. *God grant that our* Jeruſalem *may at length be made a praiſe in the Earth, by a confluence of theſe, infinitely above all other, deſirable Bleſſings.*

Philal. Amen.

FINIS.